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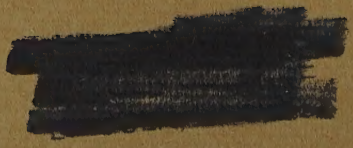

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MAN
1906
14

THE BETROTHED

(*I PROMESSI SPOSI*)

BY

ALESSANDRO MANZONI

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

JAMES CARDINAL GIBBONS

THE NATIONAL ALUMNI

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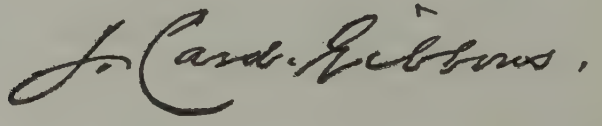
INTRODUCTION

IT is a real pleasure to me to have this opportunity of saying a word in praise of Manzoni's novel *The Betrothed.* It is above all things else a clean, healthy romance, and at the same time elegant, interesting, and instructive. I regard it indeed as a classic; and no Italian at least can lay claim to a knowledge of letters who has not read this work of Manzoni's. For analysis of character, and for understanding of the human heart, he deserves especial praise. And then, he has been so happy in his selection of noble characters, has portrayed them so admirably, that Fra Cristoforo and Federigo Borromeo shed glory upon his pages and uplift the reader to the highest pitch of admiration. The trials and difficulties of the young lovers form the thread of the narrative, which never lags nor grows wearisome. The timidity of Don Abbondio, and his fear of the *bravi*, supply a fund of humor that is delicious in its gentle mirth. Added to this are descriptions of the country surrounding Lakes Como and Lecco that are unrivaled in accuracy and beauty. The author dwells at great length and effectively on the terrible famine of Milan, and the more terrible pestilence that followed in its train, and shows the hand of a genius in describing the unreasonable excesses of a hungry mob, and the ravages of the plague, which mowed down thousands with its merciless scythe.

The Betrothed will be perused with profit, instruction, edification, and interest by all, and to most readers it will bring that rarest of pleasures which comes from association with noble, high-minded, and benevolent characters.

Count Alessandro Manzoni was born in Milan, March 7, 1785. He studied at Milan and Pavia, and at the age of twenty joined his mother in Paris, where he lived ten years, became intimate with the so-called circle of philosophers, and married the daughter of a Genoese banker. In 1816 he returned to Milan, which thenceforth was his home. He began his literary career as a poet, but in the course of it wrote tragedies, romances, and philosophical dissertations. He was a devoted Catholic, converted his Protestant wife to that faith, and became a staunch defender of the Church. *The Betrothed* was first published in 1827. Afterward he took an immense interest in the question of the best form of Italian prose, and re-wrote the whole book in pure Tuscan, issuing it thus in 1840. When Italy was united, he was made a life senator and received a pension of 12,000 francs. He died May 22, 1873. There are several editions of his works, and as many biographies.



CHAPTER I

THE COMMAND

THAT branch of Lake Como which extends toward the south is enclosed by two unbroken chains of mountains, which diversify its shores with numerous bays and inlets. Suddenly the lake contracts itself, and takes the course and form of a river, between a promontory on the right, and a wide open shore on the opposite side. The bridge at that point renders this transformation more sensible to the eye, and marks the point where the lake ends and the Adda again begins—soon to resume the name of lake, where the receding banks allow the water to spread itself in new gulfs and bays.

The open country bordering the lake, formed of the alluvial deposit of three great torrents, reclines at the foot of two contiguous mountains, one named San Martino, the other, in the Lombard dialect, *Il Resegone*, because of its many peaks seen in profile, which resemble the teeth of a saw, so much so, that no one at first sight, viewing it in front, could fail to distinguish it, by this simple description, from the mountains of more obscure name and ordinary form in that vast chain.

Lecco, the principal town, is near the bridge, and so close upon the shore that when the waters are high it appears to stand in the lake. At the time of this story Lecco was also a place of defence, and had the honor of lodging a commander, and the advantage of possessing a garrison of Spanish soldiers.

From one to the other of these towns, from the heights

to the lake, from one height to another, down through the little valleys which lay between, ran many narrow lanes or mule-paths, in most places enclosed by walls built of large flints, and clothed here and there with ancient ivy.

Along one of these narrow lanes, in the evening of November 7, 1628, Don Abbondio, curate of one of the towns alluded to above, was leisurely returning from a walk. He was repeating his office, and now and then, between one psalm and another, he would shut the breviary upon the forefinger of his right hand; then, putting both his hands behind his back, he pursued his way with downcast eyes. Thus he gave more undisturbed audience to the idle thoughts that had come to tempt his spirit, while his lips repeated his evening prayers. After a turn the road ran straight forward about sixty yards, and then divided into two lanes, Y-fashion. The right-hand path ascended toward the mountain, and led to the parsonage; the left branch descended through the valley to a torrent; and on this side the walls were not higher than two feet. The worthy curate, having turned the corner, beheld an unexpected sight. Two men, one opposite the other, were stationed at the meeting of the ways. One of them was sitting across the low wall, with one leg dangling on the outer side, and the other supporting him in the path. His companion was leaning against the wall with his arms crossed on his breast. Each had a green net on his head, which fell upon the left shoulder and ended in a large tassel. Their long hair, appearing in one large lock upon the forehead; on the upper lip two long mustachios, curled at the end; their doublets, confined by bright leathern girdles, from which hung a brace of pistols; a little horn of powder, dangling round their necks and falling on their breasts like a necklace; on the right side of their large and loose trousers a pocket, and from the pocket the handle of

a dagger; a sword hanging on the left, with a large basket-hilt of brass, carved in cipher, polished and gleaming—all showed them to be bravoes.

That these men were on the lookout for some one, was evident; but what more alarmed Don Abbondio was that he was assured by certain signs that he was the person expected; for, the moment he appeared, they exchanged glances, raising their heads with a movement that said, "Here's our man!" Don Abbondio, keeping the breviary open as if reading, watched their movements and saw them advancing straight toward him.

"Signor Curato!" said one, staring in his face.

"Who commands me?" quickly answered Don Abbondio, raising his eyes.

"You intend," continued the other, with the angry brow of one who has caught an inferior committing a grievous fault, "you intend, to-morrow, to marry Renzo Tramaglino and Lucia Mondella!"

"That is"— replied Don Abbondio, with a quivering voice—"that is—You, gentlemen, are men of the world, and know well how these things go. A poor curate has nothing to do with them. They patch up their little treaties between themselves, and then—then they come to us, as one goes to the bank to make a demand; and we—we are servants of the community."

"Mark well," said the bravo, in a lower voice, but with a solemn tone of command, "this marriage is not to be performed, not to-morrow, nor ever."

"But, gentlemen," replied Don Abbondio, with the soothing, mild tone of one who would persuade an impatient man, "be so kind as to put yourselves in my place. If the thing depended on me—you see plainly that it is no advantage to me."

"Come, come," interrupted the bravo; "if the thing were to be decided by prating, you might soon put our heads in a poke. We know nothing about it, and we

don't wish to know more. A warned man—you understand."

"But gentlemen like you are too just, too reasonable"—

"But" (this time the other companion broke in, who had not hitherto spoken)—"but the marriage is not to be performed, or"— here a great oath—"or he who performs it will never repent, because he shall have no time for it"—another oath.

"Silence!" replied the first orator. "The Signor Curato knows the way of the world, and we are a good sort of men, who don't wish to do him any harm, if he will act like a wise man. Signor Curato, the illustrious Signor Don Rodrigo, our master, sends his kind respects."

To the mind of Don Abbondio this name was like the lightning flash in a storm at night, which, illuminating for a moment and confusing all objects, increases the terror. As by instinct he made a low bow, and said, "If you could suggest"—

"Oh! *suggest* is for you who know Latin," again interrupted the bravo; "it is all very well for you. But, above all, let not a word be whispered about this notice that we have given you for your good, or—Ahem!—it will be the same as marrying them. Well, what will your Reverence that we say for you to the illustrious Signor Don Rodrigo?"

"My respects."

"Be clear, Signor Curato."

"Disposed—always disposed to obedience." And uttering these words, he did not well know whether he had given a promise, or had only sent an ordinary compliment. The bravoes took it, and showed that they took it, in the more serious meaning.

"Very well—good evening, Signor Curato," said one of them, leading his companion away.

Don Abbondio, who a few moments before would have given one of his eyes to be rid of them, now wished to

prolong the conversation and modify the treaty. In vain —they would not listen, but took the path along which he had come, and were soon out of sight, singing a ballad. Poor Don Abbondio stood for a moment with his mouth open, as if enchanted: then he too departed, taking that path which led to his house.

The arm of the law by no means protected the quiet inoffensive man, who had no other means of inspiring fear. Not, indeed, that there was any want of laws and penalties against private violence. But impunity was organized and implanted so deeply that its roots were untouched, or at least unmoved. Whoever, before committing a crime, had taken measures to secure his escape in time to a convent or a palace, where the armed police had never dared to enter; whoever (without any other measures) bore a livery that called to his defence the vanity and interests of a powerful family or order, such a one was free to do as he pleased.

The clergy were ready to defend and extend their immunities; the nobility their privileges, the military their exemptions.

Our Abbondio, not noble, not rich, not courageous, was therefore accustomed from his very infancy to look upon himself as a vessel of fragile earthenware, obliged to journey in company with many vessels of iron. Hence he had very easily acquiesced in his parents' wish to make him a priest.

Don Abbondio, continually absorbed in thoughts about his own security, cared not at all for those advantages which risked a little to secure a great deal. His system was to escape all opposition, and to yield where he could not escape. In all the frequent contests carried on around him between the clergy and the laity, in perpetual collision between officials and the nobility, between the nobility and the magistrates, between bravoes and soldiers, down to the pitched battle between two rustics,

arising from a word, and decided with fists or poniards, an unarmed neutrality was his chosen position.

This continual exercise of endurance, these many bitter mouthfuls gulped down in silence, had so far exasperated his disposition that, had he not had an opportunity sometimes of giving it a little of its own way, his health would certainly have suffered. He was a rigid censor of those who did not guide themselves by his rules; that is, when the censure could be passed without any danger. Was anyone beaten? he was at least imprudent;—any one murdered? he had always been a turbulent meddler. If anyone, having tried to maintain his right against some powerful noble, came off with a broken head, Don Abbondio always knew how to discover some fault.

My readers may imagine what impression such an encounter as has been related above would make on the mind of this pitiable being. The fearful aspect of those faces; the great words; the threats of a Signor known for never threatening in vain; a system of living in quiet, the patient study of so many years, upset in a moment; and, in prospect, a path narrow and rugged, from which no exit could be seen—all these thoughts buzzed about tumultuously in the downcast head of Don Abbondio.

Amid the tumult of all these thoughts he reached his own door—hastily applied the key which he held in his hand, opened, entered, closed it carefully behind him, and, anxious to find himself in trustworthy company, called quickly, "Perpetua, Perpetua!" as he went toward the dining-room, where he was sure to find Perpetua laying the cloth for supper.

Perpetua was Don Abbondio's servant, a servant affectionate and faithful, who knew how to obey and command in turn as occasion required—to bear, in season, the grumblings and fancies of her master, and to make him bear the like when her turn came; which day by day recurred more frequently, since she had passed the

sinodal age of forty, remaining single because, as she said herself, she had refused all offers, or because she had never found anyone goose enough to have her, as her friends said.

"I am coming," replied Perpetua, putting down in its usual place a little flask of Don Abbondio's favorite wine, and moving leisurely. But before she reached the door of the dining-room, he entered, with a step so unsteady, with an expression so overcast, with features so disturbed, that there had been no need of Perpetua's experienced eye to discover at a glance that something very extraordinary had happened.

"Mercy! what has happened to you, master?"

"Nothing, nothing," replied Don Abbondio, sinking down breathless on his armchair.

"Nothing! Would you make me believe that, so disordered as you are? Some great misfortune has happened."

"Oh, for Heaven's sake! When I say nothing, either it is nothing, or it is something I cannot tell."

"Not tell, even to me? Who will take care of your safety, sir? who will advise you?"

"Hold your tongue, and say no more: give me a glass of my wine."

"And you will persist, sir, that it is nothing!" said Perpetua, filling the glass, and then holding it in her hand, as if she would give it in payment for the confidence he kept her waiting for so long.

"Give it here, give it here," said Don Abbondio, taking the glass from her with no very steady hand, and emptying it hastily, as if it were a draught of medicine.

"Do you wish me, then, sir, to be obliged to ask here and there what has happened to my master?" said Perpetua, standing opposite him, with her arms akimbo, looking steadily at him, as if she would gather the truth from his eyes.

"For Heaven's sake! let us have no brawling—let us have no noise: it is—it is my life!"

"Your life!"

"My life."

"You know, sir, that whenever you have told me any thing sincerely in confidence, I have never"—

"Well done! for instance, when"—

Perpetua saw she had touched a wrong chord; wherefore, suddenly changing her tone, "Signor, master," she said, with a softened voice, "I have always been an affectionate servant to you, sir; and if I wish to know this, it is because of my care for you, because I wish to be able to help you, to give good advice, and to comfort you."

The fact was that Don Abbondio was perhaps just as anxious to get rid of his burdensome secret as Perpetua was to know it. In consequence, after rebutting, always more feebly, her reiterated and more vigorous assaults, after making her vow more than once not to breathe the subject, with many sighs and doleful exclamations he related at last the miserable event. When he came to the terrible name, it was necessary for Perpetua to make new and more solemn vows of silence; and Don Abbondio, having pronounced this name, sank back on the chair, lifting up his hands in act at once of command and entreaty—exclaiming, "For Heaven's sake!"

"Mercy!" exclaimed Perpetua, "Oh, what a wretch! Oh, what a tyrant! Oh, what a godless man!"

"Will you hold your tongue? or do you wish to ruin me altogether?"

"Why, we're all alone: no one can hear us. But what will you do, sir? Oh, my poor master!"

"You see now, you see," said Don Abbondio, in an angry tone, "what good advice this woman can give me! She comes and asks me what shall I do, what shall I do, as if she were in a quandary, and it were my place to help her out."

"I could give my poor opinion; but then"—

"Well, let us hear."

"My advice would be, since, as everybody says, our Archbishop is a saint, a bold-hearted man, who is not afraid of an ugly face, and who glories in upholding a poor curate against these tyrants, when he has an opportunity—I should say, and I do say, that you should write a nice letter to inform him that"—

"Will you hold your tongue? Will you be silent? Is this fit advice to give a poor man? When a bullet was lodged in my back (Heaven defend me!), would the Archbishop dislodge it?"

"Why! bullets don't fly in showers like comfits. Woe to us, if these dogs could bite whenever they bark! And I have always taken notice that whoever knows how to show his teeth, and make use of them, is treated with respect; and just because master will never give his reasons, we are come to that pass that every one comes to us, if I may say it, to"—

"Will you hold your tongue?"

"I will directly; but it is certain that when all the world sees a man always, in every encounter, ready to yield the"—

"Will you hold your tongue? Is this a time for such nonsensical words?"

"Very well: you can think about it to-night; but now, don't be doing any mischief to yourself; don't be making yourself ill—take a mouthful to eat."

"Think about it, shall I?" grumbled Don Abbondio, "to be sure I shall think about it. I've got it to think about;" and he rose, continuing: "I will take nothing, nothing: I have something else to do. I know, too, what I ought to think about it. But, that this should have come to *me!*"

"Swallow at least this other little drop," said Perpetua, pouring it out; "you know, sir, this always strengthens your stomach."

"Ah, we want another strengthener—another—another"—

So saying, he took the candle, and grumbling, "A nice business for a man like me! and to-morrow, what is to be done?" with other like lamentations, went to his chamber to lie down. When he had reached the door, he paused a moment, turned round and laid his finger on his lips, pronouncing slowly and solemnly, "For Heaven's sake!" and disappeared.

CHAPTER II

DISAPPOINTMENT

IT is related that the Prince Condé slept soundly the night before the battle of Rocroi. But, first, he was very tired, and secondly, he had given all needful previous orders, and arranged what was to be done on the morrow. Don Abbondio, on the other hand, as yet knew nothing, except that the morrow would be a day of battle: hence a great part of the night was spent by him in anxious and harassing deliberations. To take no notice of the lawless intimation, and proceed with the marriage, was a plan on which he had not even expended a thought. To confide the occurrence to Renzo, and seek with him some means of escape—he dreaded the thought; he must not whisper a word. The course that seemed best to him was to gain time by imposing on Renzo. He remembered that it wanted only a few days of the time when weddings were prohibited.—And if I can only put him off for these few days, I have then two months before me, and in two months great things may be done.—

Lorenzo, or, as every one called him, Renzo, did not keep him long waiting. Hardly had the hour arrived at which he thought he could with propriety present him-

self to the curate, when he set out with the light step of a man of twenty, who was on that day to espouse her whom he loved. He had in early youth been deprived of his parents, and carried on the trade of a silk-weaver, hereditary, so to say, in his family; a trade lucrative enough in former years, but even then beginning to decline, yet not to such a degree that a clever workman was not able to make an honest livelihood by it. Renzo possessed, besides, a plot of land, which he cultivated, working in it himself when he was disengaged from his silk-weaving, so that in his station he might be called a rich man. Although this year was one of greater scarcity than those which had preceded it, and real want began to be felt already, yet he, having become a saver of money since he had cast his eyes upon Lucia, found himself sufficiently furnished with provisions, and had no need to beg his bread. He appeared before Don Abbondio in gay bridal costume, with feathers of various colors in his cap, a richly-hilted dagger in his pocket, and an air of festivity and of defiance, common at that time even to the most quiet men.

"I have come, Signor Curato, to know at what hour it will suit you for us to be at church," said Renzo.

"Of what day are you speaking?"

"Of what day? Don't you remember, sir, that this is the day fixed upon?"

"To-day?" replied Don Abbondio, as if he now heard it spoken of for the first time. "To-day, to-day—don't be impatient, but to-day I cannot."

"To-day you cannot! What has happened, sir?"

"First of all, I do not feel well, you see."

"I am very sorry, but what you have to do, sir, is so soon done, and so little fatiguing"—

"And then—and then"—

"And then what, Signor Curato?"

"And then, there are difficulties."

"Difficulties! What difficulties can there be?"

"You need to stand in our shoes, to understand what perplexities we have in these matters, what reasons to give. I am too soft-hearted; I think of nothing but how to remove obstacles, and make all easy, and arrange things to please others; I neglect my duty, and then I am subject to reproofs, and worse."

"But in Heaven's name, don't keep me in this suspense —tell me at once what is the matter."

"Do you know how many, many formalities are necessary to perform a marriage regularly?"

"I should know a little about it," said Renzo, beginning to be warm, "for you, sir, have puzzled my head enough about it the last few days. But now is not everything made clear? Is not everything done that had to be done?"

"All, all, on your part: therefore, have patience! An ass I am to neglect my duty that I may not give pain to people. We poor curates are between the anvil and the hammer; you are impatient; I am sorry for you, poor young man; and the great people—enough! one must not say everything. And *we* have to go between."

"But explain to me at once, sir, what this new formality is that has to be gone through, as you say; and it shall be done soon."

"Do you know what the number of absolute impediments is?"

"What would you have me know about impediments, sir?"

Error, condito, votum, cognatio crimen, cultus disparitas, vis, ordo—si sit affinis."

"Are you making game of me, sir? What do you expect me to know about your Latinorum?"

"Oh, come now—if you don't understand things, have patience, and leave them to those who do. So be quiet, my dear Renzo, don't get in a passion, for I am

ready to do—all that depends on me. I wish to see you happy; I wish you well. Alas! when I think how well off you were—what more did you need? The whim of getting married came upon you"—

"What talk is this, Signor mio?" interrupted Renzo, with a voice between astonishment and anger.

"Have patience, I tell you! I wish to see you happy."

"In short"—

"In short, my son, this delay is no fault of mine. I did not make the law; and before concluding a marriage, it is our special duty to certify ourselves that there is no impediment."

"But come, tell me once for all what impediment has come in the way?"

"Have patience, they are not things to be deciphered thus at a standing. It will be nothing to us, I hope; but, be the consequence great or little, we must make these researches. The text is clear and evident: *antequam matrimonium denunciet*"—

"I have told you, sir, I will have no Latin."

"But it is necessary that I should explain to you"—

"But have you not made all these researches?"

"I tell you, I have not made them all, as I must."

"Why did you not do it in time, sir? Why did you tell me that all was finished? Why wait"—

"Look now! you are finding fault with my over-kindness. I have facilitated everything to serve you without loss of time; but now I have received—Enough, I know!"

"And what do you wish me to do, sir?"

"To have patience for a few days. My dear son, a few days are not eternity: have patience!"

"For how long?"

—We are in good train now, thought Don Abbondio: and added with a more polite manner than ever: "Come now, in a fortnight I will endeavor to do"—

"A fortnight! This indeed is something new! You

have had everything your own way, sir; you fixed the day; the day arrives; and now you tell me that I must wait a fortnight. A fortnight!"

Don Abbondio interrupted him, taking his hand with timid and anxious friendliness: "Come, come, don't be angry, for Heaven's sake! I will try whether in one week"—

"And Lucia—what must I say to her?"

"That it has been an oversight of mine."

"And what will the world say?"

"Tell them, too, that I have made a blunder through overhaste, through too much good-nature; lay all the fault on me. Can I say more? Come now, for one week."

"And then will there be no more impediments?"

"When I tell you"—

"Very well: I will be quiet for a week; but I know well enough that when it is passed, I shall get nothing but talk. But before that I shall see you again." He retired, making a bow much less respectful than usual to Don Abbondio, and bestowing on him a glance more expressive than reverent.

While walking with a heavy heart toward the home of his betrothed, he turned his thoughts on the late conversation, and more and more strange it seemed to him. The youth was just on the point of turning back, to oblige him to speak more plainly, when he saw Perpetua a little way before him, entering a garden a few paces distant from the house. He gave her a call to open the garden door for him, quickened his pace, came up with her, detained her in the doorway, and stood still to have a conversation with her to discover something more positive.

"Good morning, Perpetua, I hoped we should have been merry to-day altogether."

"But! as Heaven wills, my poor Renzo"—

"I want you to do me a kindness. The Signor Curato

has been making a long story of certain reasons which I can not well understand; will you explain to me better why he cannot or will not marry us to-day?"

"Oh! is it likely I know my master's secrets?"

—I knew there was some hidden mystery, thought Renzo; and to draw it forth he continued: "Come, Perpetua, we are friends; tell me what you know, help an unfortunate youth."

"It is a bad thing to be born poor, my dear Renzo."

"That is true," he replied; "but is it for a priest to deal hardly with the poor?"

"Listen, Renzo, I can tell you nothing; because—I know nothing; but what you may assure yourself of, is, that my master does not wish to ill-treat you, or anybody; and it is not his fault."

"Whose fault is it, then?" demanded Renzo, with an air of indifference, but with an anxious heart and ears on the alert.

"When I tell you I know nothing—In defence of my master I can speak; because I can't bear to hear that he is ready to do ill to any one. Poor man! if he does wrong, it is from too good-nature. There certainly are some wretches in the world, overbearing tyrants, men without the fear of God"—

—Tyrants! wretches! thought Renzo: do not these words mean the nobility? "Come," said he, with difficulty hiding his increasing agitation, "come, tell me who it is."

"Oh, oh! you want to make me speak; and I cannot speak, because—I know nothing; when I know nothing, it is the same as if I had taken an oath not to tell. You might put me to the rack, and you would get nothing from my mouth. Good-by; it is lost time for you and me both." So saying, she entered the garden quickly, and shut the door. Renzo turned back with a quiet step, that she might not hear which way he took; but when he

got beyond reach of the good woman's ears, he quickened his pace; in a moment he was at Don Abbondio's door, entered, went straight to the room in which he had left him, found him there, and went toward him with a reckless bearing, and eyes glancing anger.

"What new thing is this?" said Don Abbondio.

"Who is that tyrant," said Renzo, with the voice of a man who is determined to obtain a precise reply, "who is the tyrant that is unwilling I should marry Lucia?"

"What? what? what?" stammered the poor astonished man, his face in a moment becoming pale. He made a start from his armchair, to dart toward the door. But Renzo, who might have expected this movement, was on the alert, sprang there before him, locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

"Ah! Will you speak *now*, Signor Curato? Everybody knows my affairs, except myself? But, by Bacchus, I too will know. What is his name?"

"Renzo! for charity, take care what you are about; think of your soul."

"I *am* thinking that I will know it quickly, in a moment." And as he spoke, perhaps without being aware of it, he laid his hand on the hilt of the dagger that projected from his pocket.

"*Misericordia!*" exclaimed Don Abbondio, in a feeble voice.

"I will know it."

"Who has told you?"

"No more trickery! Speak positively and quickly.

"Do you wish me to be killed?"

"I wish to know what I have a right to know."

"But if I speak, I'm a dead man! Surely I need not trample on my own life?"

"Then speak."

This "then" was pronounced with such energy, and Renzo's face became so threatening, than Don Abbondio

could no longer entertain a hope of the possibility of disobedience.

"Promise me—swear to me," said he, "not to speak of it to anyone, never to tell"—

"I promise you, sir, that I will do an ill deed if you don't tell me quick—quick, his name!"

At this new adjuration, Don Abbondio, with the face and look of a man who has the pincers of the dentist in his mouth, articulated, "Don"—

"Don"—repeated Renzo, as if to help the patient to utter the rest; while he stood bending forward, his ear turned toward the open mouth of Don Abbondio, his arms stretched out, and his clenched fists behind him.

"Don Rodrigo!" hastily uttered the compelled curate.

"Ah, dog!" shouted Renzo; "and how has he done it? And what has he said to?"—

"How, eh? how?" replied Don Abbondio, in an indignant voice. "How, eh? I wish it had happened to you, as it has to me, who have not put my foot in it for nothing; for then, certainly, you would not have so many crotchets in your head." And here he depicted in dreadful colors the terrible encounter. Perceiving that Renzo, between anger and confusion, stood motionless, with his head down, he continued triumphantly: "You have done a pretty deed! Nice treatment you have given me! To serve such a trick to an honest man, to your curate—in his own house—in a sacred place! You have done a fine action, to force from my lips my own ruin and yours, that which I concealed from you in prudence, for your own good! And now, when you do know it, how much wiser are you? I should like to know what you would have done to me! No joking here, no question of right and wrong, but mere force. And this morning, when I gave you good advice, you flew into a rage directly. Now open the door and give me my key."

"I may have been wrong," replied Renzo, with a voice softened toward Don Abbondio, but in which suppressed rage against his newly-discovered enemy might be detected; "I may have been wrong; but put your hand to your heart, and think whether in my case"—

So saying, he took the key from his pocket, and went to open the door. Don Abbondio stood behind; and while Renzo turned the key in the lock, he came beside him, and with a serious and anxious face, holding up three fingers of his right hand, as if to help him in his turn, he said, "Swear, at least."

"I may have been wrong, and I beg your pardon, sir," answered Renzo, opening the door and preparing to go out.

"Swear!" replied Don Abbondio, seizing him by the arm with a trembling hand.

"I may have been wrong," repeated Renzo, as he extricated himself from him, and departed with vehement haste.

Don Abbondio, perplexed and bewildered, rested himself on his armchair; he began to feel a certain quaking of the bones; he sighed, and called from time to time, with a tremulous and anxious voice—"Perpetua!" Perpetua arrived at length, with a great cabbage under her arm, and a business-like face, as if nothing were the matter.

Renzo, meanwhile, walked excitedly toward home, without having determined what he ought to do, but with a mad longing to do something strange and terrible. Renzo was of peaceful disposition and averse to violence; sincere, and one who abhorred deceit; but at this moment his heart panted for murder: his mind was occupied only in devising a plot. He would have wished to hasten to Don Rodrigo's house, to seize him by the throat, and—but he remembered that his house was like a fortress, garrisoned with bravoes within, and guarded without; that only friends and servants, well known, could enter

freely, without being searched from head to foot; that an artisan, if unknown, could not put foot within it without an examination; and that he, above all, probably would be too well known. And his own beautiful Lucia?—Hardly had this word come across these dreadful fancies, when the better thoughts with which Renzo was familiar came into his mind. But the thought of his Lucia—how many recollections it brought! So many hopes, so many promises, a future so bright, so secure, and this day so longed for! And with what words should he announce to her such news? The overbearing act of Don Rodrigo could have no motive but a lawless passion for Lucia. And Lucia! could she have given him the smallest encouragement, the most distant hope? Could he have conceived this infamous passion without her perceiving it? And she never had mentioned a word of it!

Overcome by these thoughts, he passed his own house, and came to that of Lucia. This cottage had a little garden in front, which separated it from the road; and the garden was surrounded by a low wall. As Renzo entered, he heard a confused and continual murmur of voices from an upper room. A little girl, who happened to be in the garden, ran to meet him, crying, "The bridegroom! the bridegroom!"

"Gently, Bettina, gently!" said Renzo. "Come here; go up to Lucia, take her on one side and whisper in her ear—but mind no one hears, or suspects—tell her I want to speak to her, and that I'm waiting in the down-stairs room, and that she must come immediately." The child ran quickly upstairs, delighted and proud to be trusted with a secret.

Lucia had just come forth adorned from head to foot by the hands of her mother. Her friends were stealing glances at the bride, and forcing her to show herself; while she, with the somewhat warlike modesty of a rustic, was endeavoring to escape, using her arms as a shield

for her face, and holding her head down, her black penciled eyebrows seeming to frown, while her lips were smiling. Her dark and luxuriant hair was dressed in many-circled braids, pierced with long silver pins, disposed so as to look like an aureole. Round her neck she had a necklace of garnets, alternated with beads of filigree gold. She wore a pretty bodice of flowered brocade, laced with colored ribbons, a short skirt of embroidered silk, plaited in minute folds, scarlet stockings, and a pair of shoes also of embroidered silk. Besides these, which were the special ornaments of her wedding-day, Lucia had the everyday ornament of a modest beauty, increased by the varied feelings that were depicted in her face: joy tempered by a slight confusion, that placid sadness which occasionally shows itself on the face of a bride. The little Bettina made her way among the talkers, went close to Lucia, cleverly made her understand that she had something to communicate, and whispered her little message in her ear. "I am going for a moment, and will return directly," said Lucia to her friends, and hastily descended the stairs.

On seeing the changed look and the unquiet manner of Renzo, "What is the matter?" she exclaimed, not without a presentiment of terror.

"Lucia!" replied Renzo, "it is all up for to-day; and God knows when we can be husband and wife."

"What?" said Lucia, altogether amazed. Renzo briefly related to her the events of the morning; she listened in great distress; and when she heard the name of Don Rodrigo, "Ah!" she exclaimed, blushing and trembling, "has it come to this point!"

"Then you knew it?" said Renzo.

"Only too well," answered Lucia, "but to this point!"

"What did you know about it?"

"Don't make me speak now—don't make me cry. I will run and call my mother, and send away the girls."

She was about to go, when Renzo murmured, "You never told me anything about it."

"Ah, Renzo!" replied Lucia, turning round for a moment without stopping. Renzo understood very well that his name so pronounced by Lucia, at that moment, in such a tone, meant to say, Can *you* doubt that I could be silent, except for just and pure motives?

By this time the good Agnese (so Lucia's mother was named), incited to suspicion and curiosity by the whisper in Lucia's ear, had come down to see what was the matter. Her daughter, leaving her with Renzo, returned to the assembled maidens, and, composing her voice and manner as well as she could, said, "The Signor Curato is ill, and nothing will be done to-day." This said, she hastily bade them good-by, and went down again. The company departed, and dispersed themselves through the village, to recount what had happened, and to find out whether Don Abbondio was really ill.

CHAPTER III

A LEARNED DOCTOR

WHILE Renzo was relating with pain what Agnese with pain listened to, Lucia entered the room. Both turned toward her; she indeed knew more about the mystery than they, and of her they awaited an explanation which could not but be distressing.

"Now I will tell you all," said Lucia, as she dried her eyes with her apron.

"Speak, speak!" cried both mother and lover.

"Most Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Lucia, "who could have believed it would have come to this!" Then, with a tremulous voice, she related how, as she was returning from her spinning, and had loitered behind her compan-

ions, Don Rodrigo, in company with another gentleman, had passed her; that he had tried to engage her in foolish talk, as she called it; but she, without giving him an answer, had quickened her pace and joined her companions; then she had heard the other gentleman laugh loudly, and Don Rodrigo say, "I'll lay you a wager." The next day they were again on the road, but Lucia was in the midst of her companions with her eyes on the ground; then the other gentleman laughed, and Don Rodrigo said, "We shall see, we shall see!" "This day," continued Lucia, "thank God, was the last of the spinning. I told it immediately"—

"Who was it you told it to?" demanded Agnese, waiting, not without a little displeasure, for the name of the confidante who had been preferred to herself.

"To Father Cristoforo, in confession, mamma," replied Lucia, with a sweet tone of apology. "I related the whole to him, the last time we went to church together, at the convent."

At the reverend name of Father Cristoforo, the wrath of Agnese subsided. "You did well," said she; "but why not tell all to your mother also?"

Lucia had had two good reasons: one not to distress and frighten the good woman about an event against which she could have found no remedy; the other not to run the risk of a story traveling from mouth to mouth, which she wished to be kept with jealous silence; the more so because Lucia hoped that her marriage would have cut short at the beginning this hated persecution.

"And what did the Father say to you?" asked Agnese.

"He told me I must try to hasten the wedding as much as I could, and in the mean time to keep myself within-doors; that I should pray to the Lord; and he hoped that this man, if he did not see me, would not care any more about me. And it was then that I forced myself," continued she, turning again toward Renzo,

without however raising her eyes, and blushing to the temples, "it was then that I put on a too bold face, and begged you to get it done soon, and have it concluded before the fixed time. Who knows what you must have thought of me! But I did it for good, and it was advised me, and I thought for certain"—

Here Lucia's words were cut short by a violent burst of tears.

"Ah, rascal! wretch! murderer!" exclaimed Renzo, striding to and fro, grasping the hilt of his dagger.

"Oh, heavens, what a fury!" exclaimed Agnese. The young man suddenly drew himself up before Lucia, who was weeping, looked at her with an anxious and embittered tenderness, and said, "This is the last deed that assassin shall do."

"Ah, no, Renzo, for Heaven's sake!" cried Lucia; "no, no, for Heaven's sake! God is on the side of the poor, but how can we expect Him to help us if we do wrong? Renzo, you have a trade, and I know how to work; let us go so far away that this man will hear no more about us."

"Ah, Lucia! and what then? We are not yet man and wife! Will the curate give us a certificate of no impediment, such a man as he is? If we were married"—

"Listen, my children; attend to me," said Agnese, after some moments; "I came into the world long before you; and I know something about the world. You need not frighten yourselves too much: things are not so bad as people make out. To us poor people the skein seems more entangled because we cannot get hold of the right end; but sometimes a piece of good advice, a little talk with a man who has got learning—I know well enough what I would say. Do as I tell you, Renzo; go to Lecco, seek for Doctor Azzecca-garbugli, tell him all about it—but mind you don't call him so; it's a nickname. You must tell the Signor Doctor—What do they call him? I don't know his right name; everybody calls him so.

Never mind, seek for this doctor; he is tall, thin, bald, with a red nose and a raspberry-colored mole on his cheek."

"I know him by sight," said Renzo.

"Well," continued Agnese, "he *is* a man! Take these four capons, poor creatures! whose necks I should have wrung for to-night's supper, and carry them to him; because we must never go empty-handed to these gentlemen. Relate to him all that has happened, and you'll see he will tell you, in a twinkling, things which would not come into our heads if we were to try to think about them for a year."

Renzo willingly embraced this counsel; Lucia approved it; and Agnese, proud of having given it, took the fowls from the hen-coop, united their eight legs, as one makes up a bunch of flowers, tied them up with a piece of string, and consigned them to the hands of Renzo, who, after giving and receiving words of encouragement and hope, went out by a little gate from the garden, that he might escape the observation of the boys, who would have run after him, crying, "The bridegroom! the bridegroom!"

Arriving at the village, he inquired for the doctor's house, and when it was pointed out to him, quickly made his way thither. On approaching it, however, he began to feel that bashfulness so usual with the poor and ignorant in the presence of a gentleman or man of learning, and forgot all the fine speeches he had prepared; but a glance at the chickens restored his courage. He went into the kitchen, and asked the maid-servant if he could see the Signor Doctor. The woman looked at the birds, and, as if accustomed to such presents, was about to take them, but Renzo held them back, because he wanted the doctor to see he had brought something with him. Just at this moment the wished-for personage made his appearance, as the servant was saying, "Give them here, and go forward to the study." Renzo made a low bow

to the doctor, who graciously bade him "Come in, my son," and took him into his study. The doctor was in his dressing-gown; that is to say, he had on a faded robe, which had served him for many years to harangue in on days of state, when he went to Milan on any important cause. Having shut the door, he re-animated the young man's confidence with these words: "Tell me your case, my son."

"I wish to speak a word to you in confidence."

"I'm ready—speak," replied the doctor, seating himself on his armchair.

Renzo stood before the table, and twirling his hat with his right hand round the other, continued: "I want to know from you, who have studied"—

"Tell me the case as it is," interrupted the doctor.

"Excuse me, Signor Doctor: we poor people don't know how to speak properly. I want, then to know"—

"You are all alike. Instead of relating your case, you ask questions, because you've already made up your minds."

"I beg your pardon, Signor Doctor. I want to know if there's any punishment for threatening a curate and forbidding him to celebrate a marriage?"

"I understand," muttered the doctor, who in truth had not understood. He then put on an air of compassion and importance. "A serious case, my son, There are laws to the point. You have done well to come to me. It is a clear case, recognized in a hundred proclamations, and—stay! in an edict of the last year, by the present Signor Governor. I'll let you see it and handle it directly."

So saying, he rose from his seat, and hunted through the chaos of papers.

"Where can it be? One is obliged to have so many things in hand! But it must surely be here, for it is a proclamation of importance. Ah! here it is!" He took

it, unfolded it, looked at the date, and with a still more serious face, continued: "The fifteenth of October, 1627. Certainly; it is last year's; a fresh proclamation; it is these that cause such fear. Can you read, my son?"

"A little, Signor Doctor."

"Very well, follow me with your eye, and you shall see."

And holding the edict in the air, he began to read, rapidly muttering some passages, and pausing distinctly, with marked emphasis, upon others, as the case required.

While the doctor was reading, Renzo slowly followed him with his eye, trying to behold for himself those blessed words, which he believed were to render him assistance. The doctor, seeing his new client, more attentive than alarmed, was greatly surprised.—He must be matriculated, said he to himself.—"Ah! ah!" he added aloud; "you have been obliged to shave off the lock. You have been prudent: however, you need not have done so, when putting yourself in my hands. The case is serious; but you don't know what I have courage to do in time of need."

To understand this mistake of the doctor's, it must be known that at that time bravoes by profession, and villains of every kind, used to wear a long lock of hair, which they drew over the face like a visor on meeting any one, when the occasion was one which rendered disguise necessary, and the undertaking such as required both force and circumspection.

"On the word of a poor youth," replied Renzo, "I never wore a lock in my life."

"I can do nothing," replied the doctor, shaking his head, with a smile between malice and impatience. "If you don't trust me, I can do nothing. He who tells lies to the lawyer, do you see, my son, is a fool who will tell the truth to the judge. People must relate matters clearly to the advocate: it is our business to make them

intricate. If you wish me to help you, you must tell me all from *a* to *z*, with your heart in your hand, as if to your confessor. You must name the person who has employed you. You must tell me who is the offended party, as they say; and, according to the condition, rank, and temper of the person, we shall see whether it will be better to bring him to reason by offers of protection, or, in some way, to criminate him, and put a flea in his ear."

While the doctor poured forth this rhapsody, Renzo stood looking at him with spellbound attention. When, at last, he understood what the doctor was saying, and the strange mistake he had made, he cut short his words: "Oh, Signor Doctor, how have you understood me? The case is exactly the other way. I have threatened no one; I never do such things, not I; ask all my neighbors, and you will hear I never have had anything to do with the law. The trick has been played upon *me;* and I came to ask you what I must do to get justice, and I am very glad that I have seen this edict."

"Hang him!" exclaimed the doctor, opening his eyes. "What a bungle you have made! So it is: you are all alike; is it possible you don't know how to tell things plainly?"

"I beg your pardon, Signor Doctor, you didn't give me time; now I will relate the case as it is. You must know, then, that I was to have married to-day," and here Renzo's voice became tremulous—"I was to have married to-day a young woman to whom I have paid my addresses since the beginning of summer; and this was the day, as I said, that was fixed with the Signor Curato, and everything was ready. Well, this morning, the Signor Curato began to throw out some strange excuses—but, not to tire you, I will only say I made him speak, as was but just; and he confessed that he had been forbidden, under pain of death, to celebrate this marriage. This tyrant of a Don Rodrigo"—

"Get you gone!" quickly interrupted the doctor, "get you gone! Why do you come here to rack my brain with these lies? Talk in this way to your companions, who don't know the meaning of words, and don't come and utter them to a gentleman who knows well what they are worth. Go away, go away; you don't know what you are talking about; I don't meddle with boys; I don't want to hear talk of this sort: talk in the air."

"I will take an oath"—

"Get you gone, I tell you; what do I care for your oaths! I won't enter into the business; I wash my hands of it. Learn how to speak; and don't come and take a gentleman thus by surprise."

"But listen!" vainly repeated Renzo. The doctor, fuming all the time, pushed him toward the door, and, on reaching it, set it wide open, called the servant, and said, "Be quick, and give this man what he brought. I want nothing, I want nothing." The woman had never before executed a similar order all the time she had been in the doctor's service; but it was pronounced in so resolute a manner that she did not hesitate to obey. So, taking the four poor birds, she gave them to Renzo, with a look of contemptuous compassion, which seemed to say, "You must indeed have made a grand blunder." Renzo tried to be ceremonious, but the doctor was inexorable; and the unhappy wight, astonished and bewildered, and more wrathful than ever, was compelled to take back the restored victims, and return to the country to relate the pleasing result of his expedition.

During his absence, after sorrowfully changing their nuptial robes for the humble daily dress, they had set themselves to consult anew, Lucia sobbing, Agnese sighing mournfully from time to time. When Agnese had sufficiently enlarged upon the great effects they might hope for from the doctor's advice, Lucia remarked that they ought to try every method likely to assist them;

that Father Cristoforo was a man not only to advise, but also to render more effectual assistance, where it concerned the poor and unfortunate; and that it would be a good thing if they could let him know what had happened.

"It would, indeed," replied Agnese; and they began immediately to contrive together some plan to accomplish it; since to go themselves to the convent, distant, perhaps, two miles, was an undertaking they would rather not risk that day. While they were thus engaged in weighing the different sides of the question, they heard a knock at the door; and at the same moment, a low but distinct *Deo gratias*. Lucia, wondering who it could be, ran to open it, and immediately, making a low bow, entered a lay Capuchin collector, his bag hanging over his left shoulder, and the mouth of it twisted and held tight in his two hands, over his breast. "Oh, Brother Galdino!" exclaimed the two women. "The Lord be with you," said the friar; "I have come to beg for the nuts."

"Go and fetch the nuts for the Fathers," said Agnese. Lucia arose, and moved toward the other room; but, before entering it, she gave her mother a look demanding secrecy, in which were mingled tenderness, supplication, and even a certain air of authority.

The collector, inquisitively eyeing Agnese at a distance, said, "And this wedding? I thought it was to have been to-day; but I noticed a stir in the neighborhood, as if indicating something new. What has happened?"

"The Signor Curato is ill, and we are obliged to postpone it," hastily replied Agnese. Probably the answer might have been very different, if Lucia had not given her the hint. "And how does the collection go on?" added she, wishing to change the conversation.

"Badly, good woman, badly. They are all here." And so saying, he took the wallet off his shoulders and tossed

it up between his hands into the air. "They are all here; and to collect this mighty abundance, I have had to knock at ten doors."

"But the yield is scarce, Brother Galdino; and when one has to struggle for bread, one measures everything according to the scarcity."

At this moment Lucia returned, her apron so laden with nuts that it was with difficulty she could manage it. Agnese glanced toward Lucia a surprised and reproachful look for her prodigality; but Lucia returned a glance which seemed to say, "I will justify myself." The friar broke forth into praises, prognostications, promises, and expressions of gratitude, and replacing his bag, was about to depart. But Lucia, recalling him, said, "I want you to do me a kindness: I want you to tell Father Cristoforo that we earnestly wish to speak to him, and ask him to be so good as to come to us poor people quickly—directly; for I cannot go to the church."

"Is this all? It shall not be an hour before Father Cristoforo knows your wish."

"I believe you."

"You need not fear." And so saying, he departed, rather more burdened and a little better satisfied than when he entered the house.

As soon as the friar had left—"All those nuts!" exclaimed Agnese: "and in such a year too!"

"I beg pardon, mother," replied Lucia; "but if we had only given like others, Brother Galdino would have had to go about no one knows how long before his wallet would have been filled; and we can not tell when he would have returned to the convent; besides, what with chatting here and there, he would very likely have forgotten."

"Ah! you thought wisely; and, after all, charity always brings a good reward," and Agnese, who, spite of her little defects, was a good woman, and would have

given everything she owned for this only daughter, whom she loved with the tenderest affection.

At this moment Renzo arrived, and, entering with an irritated and mortified countenance, threw the chickens on the table; and this was the last vicissitude the poor creatures underwent that day.

"Fine advice you gave me!" said he to Agnese. "You sent me to a nice gentleman, to one who really helps the unfortunate!" And he began immediately to relate his reception at the doctor's. Poor Agnese, astonished at his ill success, endeavored to prove that her advice had been good, and that Renzo had not gone about the business cleverly; but Lucia interrupted by announcing that she hoped they had found a better helper. Renzo welcomed the hope as most people do who are in misfortune and perplexity. "But if the Father," said he, "does not find us a remedy, I will find one somehow or other." The women recommended peace, patience, and prudence. "To-morrow," said Lucia, "Father Cristoforo will certainly come, and you'll see he will find some help that we poor people can't even imagine."

"I hope so," said Renzo; "but in any case I will have redress, or find some one to get it for me. There must be justice in the end, even in this world!"

In such melancholy discourse, and in such occurrences as have been described, the day wore away, and began to decline.

"Good night," said Lucia, sorrowfully, to Renzo, who could not make up his mind to leave her. "Good night," replied he, still more mournfully.

"Some saint will help us," added she. "Be prudent, and try to be resigned." Agnese added other advice of the same kind, and the bridegroom went away with fury in his heart, repeating all the while those strange words, "There must be justice at last, even in this world!"

CHAPTER IV

FATHER CRISTOFORO

THE sun had hardly risen above the horizon when Father Cristoforo left the convent of Pescarenico, and proceeded toward the cottage where he was expected.

Why did he take so much thought for Lucia? And why at the first intimation of her wish did he attend to it so diligently, as if it were a call from the Father Provincial? And who was this Father Cristoforo?

Father Cristoforo was a man nearer sixty than fifty years of age. His shaven head, circled with a narrow line of hair, like a crown, according to the fashion of the Capuchin tonsure, was raised from time to time with a movement that betrayed somewhat of disdain and disquietude, and then quickly sank again in thoughts of lowliness and humility. His long, gray beard contrasted markedly with the prominent features of the upper part of his face, to which a long and habitual abstinence had rather given an air of gravity, than effaced the natural expression.

Father Cristoforo had not always been thus: nor had he always been Cristoforo; his baptismal name was Ludovico. He was the son of a merchant who, in his latter years, being considerably wealthy, and having only one son, had given up trade and retired as an independent gentleman.

In his new state of idleness he began to entertain a great contempt for the time he had spent in making money, and being useful in the world. Full of this fancy, he used every endeavor to make others forget that he had been a merchant; in fact, he wished to forget it himself. He gave his son an expensive education, as

far as he was permitted by the laws and customs of the country; he procured him masters in the different branches of literature and in exercises of horsemanship, and at last died, leaving the youth heir to a large fortune. Ludovico had acquired gentlemanly habits and feelings, and the flatterers by whom he had been surrounded had accustomed him to be treated with the greatest respect. But when he endeavored to mix with the first men of the city, he met with very different treatment to what he had been accustomed, and he began to perceive that, if he would be admitted into their society, as he desired, he must learn, in a new school, to be patient and submissive, and every moment to be looked down upon and despised.

Such a mode of life accorded neither with the education of Ludovico, nor with his disposition, and he withdrew from it, highly piqued.

He was walking one day along the streets in company with a former shopkeeper, whom his father had raised to the office of steward, and was followed by two bravoes. The steward, whose name was Cristoforo, was about fifty years old, devoted from childhood to his master, whom he had known from his birth, and by whose wages and liberality he was himself supported, with his wife and eight children. Ludovico perceived a gentleman at a distance, an arrogant and overbearing man, to whom he had never spoken in his life, but his cordial enemy, whom Ludovico heartily hated; for it is a singular advantage in this world, that men may hate and be hated without knowing each other. The Signor, followed by four bravoes, advanced haughtily with a proud step, his head raised, and his mouth expressive of insolence and contempt. Both walked next to the wall, which was on Ludovico's right hand; and this, according to custom, gave him the right of not moving from the said wall to give place to anyone, to which custom, at that time, great importance was attached. The Signor, on the con-

trary, in virtue of another custom, held that this right ought to be conceded to him in consideration of his rank, and that it was Ludovico's part to give way. The foes approached each other, both close to the wall, and on finding themselves face to face, the Signor, eyeing Ludovico with a haughty air and imperious frown, said in a corresponding tone, "Go to the outside."

"Go yourself," replied Ludovico, "the path is mine."

"With men of your rank the path is always mine."

"Yes, if the arrogance of men of your rank were a law for men of mine."

The two trains of attendants stood still, each behind its leader, fiercely regarding each other, with their hands on their daggers prepared for battle.

"Throw this rascal in the mud," said the Signor, turning to his followers.

"We shall see!" said Ludovico, immediately retiring a step, and laying his hand on his sword.

"Rash man!" cried the other, drawing his own, "I will break this when it is stained with your vile blood."

At these words they flew upon one another, the attendants of the two parties fighting in defence of their masters. Ludovico received a blow from the dagger of one of the bravoes in his left arm, and a slight wound on his cheek, and his principal enemy was pressing on to make an end of him, when Cristoforo, seeing his master in extreme peril, went behind the Signor with his dagger, who, turning all his fury upon his new enemy, ran him through with his sword. At this sight Ludovico, as if beside himself, buried his own weapon in the body of his provoker, and laid him at his feet, almost at the same moment as the unfortunate Cristoforo.

The scene had taken place near a Capuchin convent, an asylum, in those days, as every one knows, impenetrable to bailiffs and all that complication of persons and things which went by the name of justice. The wounded and

almost senseless murderer was conducted or rather carried by the crowd that had witnessed the fray and delivered to the monks with the recommendation, "He is a worthy man who has made a proud tyrant cold; he was provoked to it, and did it in his own defence."

Ludovico had never before shed blood, and although homicide was in those times so common that every one was accustomed to hear of and witness it, yet the impression made on his mind by the sight of one man murdered for him, and another by him, was new and indescribable—a disclosure of sentiments before unknown. The fall of his enemy, the sudden alteration of the features, passing in a moment from a threatening and furious expression to the solemn calm of approaching death, was a sight that instantly changed the feelings of the murderer. He was dragged to the convent almost without knowing where he was, or what they were doing to him; and when his memory returned, he found himself on a bed in the infirmary, attended by a surgeon-friar who was applying lint and bandages to the two wounds he had received. A father, whose special office it was to attend upon the dying, and who had frequently been called upon to exercise his duties in the street, was quickly summoned to the place of combat. He returned a few minutes afterward, and entering the infirmary, approached the bed where Ludovico lay. "Comfort yourself," said he, "he has at least died calmly, and has charged me to ask your pardon, and to convey his to you." These words aroused poor Ludovico, and awakened more vividly and distinctly the feelings which confusedly crowded upon his mind; sorrow for his friend, consternation and remorse for the blow that had escaped his hand, and at the same time a bitterly painful compassion for the man he had slain. "And the other?" anxiously demanded he of the friar.

"The other had expired when I arrived."

As soon as Ludovico could collect his scattered thoughts, he asked for a father confessor, and begged that he would seek the widow of Cristoforo, ask forgiveness in his name for his having been the involuntary cause of her desolation, and at the same time assure her that he would undertake to provide for her desolate family. In reflecting on his own condition, the wish to become a friar, which he had often before revolved in his mind, revived with double force and earnestness; it seemed as if God himself, by bringing him to a convent just at this juncture, had put it in his way, and given him a sign of His will, and his resolution was taken. He therefore called the guardian, and told him of his intention. The Superior replied that he must beware of forming precipitate resolutions, but that if on consideration he persisted in his desire, he would not be refused. He then sent for a notary, and made an assignment of the whole of his property (which was no insignificant amount) to the family of Cristoforo, a certain sum to the widow, as if it were an entailed dowry, and the remainder to the children.

Thus, at thirty, Ludovico took the monastic habit, and being required, according to custom, to change his name, he chose one that would continually remind him of the fault he had to atone for—the name of Friar Cristoforo.

Hardly was the ceremony of taking the religious habit completed, when the guardian told him that he must keep his novitiate at a town sixty miles distant, and that he must leave the next day.

Father Cristoforo pursued his way toward his new home with a peace of mind such as he had never experienced since that terrible event, to make atonement for which his whole life was henceforth to be consecrated.

If one unknown to him, in Lucia's sad condition, had implored the aid of Father Cristoforo, he would immediately have attended to the request; when it concerned

Lucia, however, he hastened to her with double solicitude, since he knew and admired her innocence. He had already trembled for her danger, and felt a lively indignation at the base persecution of which she was the object. Besides this, he feared that by advising her to say nothing about it, and keep quiet, he might have been the cause of some sad consequences: so that in this case there was added to the kind solicitude, which was natural to him, that scrupulous perplexity which often torments the innocent.

But while we have been relating the early history of Father Cristoforo, he has arrived at the village, and reached the door; and the women, leaving the harsh-toned spinning-wheel at which they were engaged, have risen and exclaimed with one voice, "Oh, Father Cristoforo! God reward you!"

CHAPTER V

THE MISSION

FATHER CRISTOFORO stopped on the threshold, and quickly perceived, by a glance at the women, that his presentiments had not been unfounded. He said, in that interrogative tone which anticipates a mournful reply, "Well?" Lucia answered by a flood of tears. Her mother began to apologize for having dared—but he advanced and seated himself on a three-legged stool, and cut short all her excuses, by saying to Lucia, "Calm yourself, my poor daughter. And you," continued he, turning to Agnese, "tell me what has happened." The good woman related the melancholy story as well as she could. At the conclusion of the recital, the friar covered his face with his hands, and exclaimed, "Oh, blessed Lord! how long!" But, without finishing the sentence, he turned again to the women.

"Poor things!" said he, "God has indeed visited you. Poor Lucia!"

"You will not forsake us, Father?" sobbed Lucia.

"Forsake you!" replied he. "Great God! with what face could I again make request to Him, if I should forsake you? Don't despair: He will help you. He sees all: He can make use even of such an unworthy instrument as I to confound a—Let us see: let me think what I can do for you."

So saying, he leaned his left elbow on his knee, laid his forehead on his hand, and with the right grasped his beard, as if to concentrate and hold fast all the powers of his mind. But the most attentive consideration only served to show more distinctly the urgency and intricacy of the case, and how few, how uncertain, and how dangerous were the ways of meeting it. Having considered every view of the question, the best course seemed to be to confront Don Rodrigo himself, and try, by entreaties, the terrors of the life to come, and even of this world, if that were possible, to dissuade him from his infamous purpose. At least, he could by this means ascertain whether he continued obstinately bent on his wicked design, discover something more of his intentions, and act accordingly. While the friar was thus engaged, Renzo, who for reasons that every one can divine could not long absent himself, made his appearance at the door; but seeing the Father absorbed in thought, and the women motioning to him not to interrupt him, he stood silent on the threshold. Raising his head to communicate his design to the women, the friar perceived Renzo, and saluted him with his usual affection, increased and rendered more intense by compassion.

"Have they told you, Father?" asked Renzo, in an agitated tone.

"Only too much: and for that reason I am here."

"What do you say to the rascal?"

"What do you wish me to say of him? He is far away, and my words would be of no use. But I say to you, my Renzo, trust in God, and He will not forsake you."

"What blessed words!" exclaimed the youth. "You are not one of those who always wrong the poor. But the Signor Curato, and that Signor Doctor!"

"Don't recall those scenes, Renzo, which only serve to irritate you uselessly. I am a poor friar; but I repeat what I have said to these poor women: poor as I am, I will not forsake you. Renzo! will you trust to me? To me, did I say—a feeble mortal, a poor friar? No; but will you trust in God?"

"Oh, yes!" replied Renzo; "He is in truth the Lord."

"Very well; promise me that you will not attack—that you will not provoke—any one; that you will be guided by me."

"I promise."

Lucia drew a long breath, as if she were relieved from a great weight; and Agnese exclaimed, "Bravo, my son!"

"Listen, my children," continued Friar Cristoforo; "I will go to-day and speak to Don Rodrigo. If it please God to touch his heart, and give force to my words, well; but, if not, He will show us some other remedy. You, in the mean while, be quiet and retired; avoid gossip, and don't show yourselves. To-night, or to-morrow morning, at the latest, you shall see me again." So saying, he cut short all their thanks and benedictions, and departed.

The small but elegant palace of Don Rodrigo stood by itself, rising like a castle from the summit of one of the abrupt cliffs by which the shore of the lake was broken and diversified. At the base of the cliff, on the side looking toward the lake, lay a group of cottages, inhabited by the peasantry in the service of Don Rodrigo, the diminutive capital of his little kingdom.

Father Cristoforo passed through this hamlet, and as-

cended a winding foot-path to a small level plot of ground in front of the palace. The door was shut—a sign that the master of the mansion was dining and would not be disturbed. Perfect silence reigned; and a passer-by might have deemed it a deserted mansion, had not four creatures, two animate, and two inanimate, disposed opposite each other, outside, given some indication of inhabitants. Two great vultures, with extended wings and pendent heads—one stripped of its feathers, and half consumed by time; the other still feathered, and in a state of preservation—were nailed, one on each post of the massive doorway; and two bravoes, stretched at full length on the benches to the right and left, were on guard, expecting their call to partake of the remains of the Signor's table. The Father stood still, in the attitude of one who was prepared to wait; but one of the bravoes rose, and called to him: "Father, Father, come forward, we don't make Capuchins wait here; we are friends of the convent; and I have sometimes been within it when the air outside was not very good for me, and when, if the door had been closed upon me, I should have fared badly." So saying, he gave two strokes of the knocker, which were answered immediately within by the howling and yelling of mastiffs and curs, and in a few moments by an old grumbling servant; but seeing the Father, he made him a low bow, quieted the animals with hand and voice, introduced the visitor into a narrow passage, and closed the door again. He then conducted him into a small apartment, and, regarding him with a surprised and respectful look, said, "Are you not Father Cristoforo of Pescarenico?"

"I am."

"You here?"

"As you see, my good man."

"It must be to do good, then. Good," continued he, as he still led the way; "good may be done anywhere."

Having passed through two or three dark apartments, they at last reached the door of the dining-room, where they were greeted with a loud and confused noise of knives, forks, glasses, pewter dishes, and, above all, of discordant voices alternately endeavoring to take the lead in conversation. The friar wished to withdraw, and was debating at the door with the servant, and begging permission to wait in some corner of the house till dinner was over, when the door opened. A certain Count Attilio, who was sitting opposite (he was a cousin of Don Rodrigo, and we have already mentioned him without giving his name), seeing a shaved head and monk's habit, and perceiving the modest intentions of the good friar, exclaimed, "Aha! aha! You shan't make your escape, reverend Father; forward, forward!" The good friar advanced, making a low bow to the host, and respectfully responding to the salutations of the guests.

"Give the Father a seat," said Don Rodrigo. A servant presented a chair, and Father Cristoforo sat down, making some excuse to the Signor for coming at so inopportune an hour.

"I wish to speak with you alone, on a matter of importance," added the friar, in a lower voice, in Don Rodrigo's ear.

"Very well, I will attend you," replied he; "but in the mean while, bring the Father something to drink."

The Father tried to excuse himself; but Don Rodrigo, rasing his voice, cried, "No, no, you shall not do me this wrong; it shall never be said that a Capuchin left this house without tasting my wine, nor an insolent creditor the wood of my forests."

Don Rodrigo, in the mean while, glanced from time to time toward the friar, and always saw him in the same station, giving no signs of impatience or hurry, without a movement tending to remind him that he was awaiting his leisure, but with the air of one who was determined

not to depart till he had had a hearing. He would gladly have sent him away and escaped the interview; but to dismiss a Capuchin without having given him an audience was not according to the rules of his policy. However, since the annoying duty could not be avoided, he resolved to discharge it at once, and free himself from the obligation. He therefore rose from the table, and with him all the party, without ceasing their clamor. Having asked leave of his guests, he advanced in a haughty manner toward the friar, who had immediately risen with the rest; and saying to him, "At your command, Father," conducted him into another apartment.

CHAPTER VI

AGNESE'S PLAN

"HOW can I serve you?" said Don Rodrigo, standing in the middle of the room. His words were these; but the tone in which they were pronounced clearly meant, "Remember before whom you are standing, take heed to your words, and be expeditious."

There was no surer or quicker way of inspiring Friar Cristoforo with courage than to address him with haughtiness. Immediately, however, recollecting how important it was not to spoil his work, or, what was far worse, the work he had undertaken for others, he corrected and tempered the language that had presented itself to his mind, and said, with cautious humility: "I come to propose to you an act of justice, to supplicate a deed of mercy. Some men of bad character have made use of the name of your illustrious lordship to alarm a poor curate, and dissuade him from performing his duty, and to oppress two innocent persons. You can confound them by a word, restore all to order, and relieve those

who are so shamefully wronged. You are able to do it; and being able—conscience, honor"—

"You will be good enough to talk of my conscience when I ask your advice about it. As to my honor, I beg to inform you I am the guardian of it, and I only; and that whoever dares intrude himself to share the guardianship with me, I regard as a rash man, who offends against it."

Friar Cristoforo, perceiving from these words that the Signor sought to put a wrong construction on all he said, and to turn the discourse into a dispute, so as to prevent his coming to the main point, bound himself still more rigidly to be patient, and to swallow every insult he might please to offer. He therefore replied, in a subdued tone, "If I have said anything to offend you, I certainly did not intend it. Correct me, reprove me, if I do not speak becomingly, but deign to listen to me. For Heaven's sake, be not obstinately resolved to refuse an act of justice so easy and so due to the poor. Remember that God's eye is ever over them, and that their imprecations are heard above. Innocence is powerful in His"—

"Aha! Father!" sharply interrupted Don Rodrigo: "the respect I bear to your habit is great; but if anything could make me forget it, it would be to see it on one who dares to come as a spy into my house."

These words brought a crimson glow upon the cheeks of the friar; but with the countenance of one who swallows a bitter medicine, he replied: "You do not think I deserve such a title. You feel in your heart that the act I am now performing is neither wicked nor contemptible. Listen to me, Signor Don Rodrigo; and Heaven grant a day may not come in which you will have to repent of not having listened to me! I will not lessen your honor. You have much in your power, but"—

"Don't you know," said Don Rodrigo, interrupting him in an agitated tone, the mingled effect of anger and remorse, "don't you know that when the fancy takes me to hear a sermon, I can go to church like other people? But in my own house! Oh!" continued he, with a forced smile of mockery: "You treat me as if I were of higher rank than I am. It is only princes who have a preacher in their own houses."

"And that God who requires princes to render an account of the word preached to them in their palaces, that God who now bestows upon you a token of His mercy, by sending *His* minister, though indeed a poor and unworthy one, to intercede for an innocent"—

"In short, Father," said Don Rodrigo, preparing to go, "I don't know what you mean; I can only suppose there must be some young girl you are concerned about. Make confidants of whom you please, but don't have the assurance to annoy a gentleman any longer."

On the movement of Don Rodrigo, the friar also advanced, reverently placed himself in his way, raised his hands, both in an attitude of supplication, and also to detain him, and again replied: "I am concerned for her, it is true, but not more than for yourself: there are two persons who concern me more than my own life. Don Rodrigo! I can only pray for you; but this I will do with my whole heart. Do not say 'No' to me; do not keep a poor innocent in anguish and terror. One word from you will do all."

"Well," said Don Rodrigo, "since you seem to think I can do so much for this person; since you are so much interested for her"—

"Well?" said Friar Cristoforo, anxiously, while the behavior and countenance of Don Rodrigo forbade his indulging in the hope which the words appeared to warrant.

"Well; advise her to come and put herself under my

protection. She shall want for nothing, and no one shall dare molest her, as I am a gentleman."

At such a proposal, the indignation of the friar burst forth without restraint. All his good resolutions of prudence and patience forsook him, the old nature usurped the place of the new; and in these cases Father Cristoforo was indeed like two different men. "Your protection!" he exclaimed, retiring a step or two, pointing with his forefinger toward Don Rodrigo, with fiery eyes piercingly fixed upon him: "your protection! Woe be to you that you have thus spoken, that you have made me such a proposal. You have filled up the measure of your iniquity, and I no longer fear you."

"How are you speaking to me, friar?"

"I speak as to one who is forsaken by God, and who can no longer excite fear. I knew that this innocent was under God's protection; but you have now made me feel it with so much certainty, that I have no longer need to ask protection of you. Lucia, I say—see how I pronounce this name with a bold face and unmoved expression."

"What! in this house!"

"I pity this house; a curse is suspended over it. You will see whether the justice of God can be resisted by four walls, and four bravoes at your gates. Thought you that God had made a creature in His image to give you the delight of tormenting her? Thought you that He would not defend her? You have despised His counsel, and you will be judged for it! The heart of Pharaoh was hardened, like yours, but God knew how to break it. Lucia is safe from you; I do not hesitate to say so, though a poor friar: and as to you, listen what I predict to you. A day will come"—

Don Rodrigo had stood till now with a mingled feeling of rage and mute astonishment; but on hearing the beginning of this prediction, an undefined and mysterious

fear was added to his anger. Hastily seizing the Father's outstretched arm, and raising his voice to drown that of the inauspicious prophet, he exclaimed, "Get out of my sight, rash villain—cowled rascal!"

These definite appellations calmed Father Cristoforo in a moment. The idea of submission and silence had been so long associated in his mind with that of contempt and injury, that at this compliment every feeling of warmth and enthusiasm instantly subsided, and he only resolved to listen patiently to whatever Don Rodrigo might be pleased to subjoin.

"Vile upstart!" continued Don Rodrigo; "you treat me like an equal: but thank the cassock that covers your cowardly shoulders for saving you from the caresses that such scoundrels as you should receive, to teach them how to talk to a gentleman. Depart with sound limbs for this once, or we shall see."

So saying, he pointed with imperious scorn to a door opposite the one they had entered; and Father Cristoforo bowed his head and departed.

When the friar had closed the door behind him, he perceived some one in the apartment he had entered, stealing softly along the wall, that he might not be seen from the room of conference; and he instantly recognized the aged servant who had received him at the door on his arrival. This man had lived in the family forty years, that is, since before Don Rodrigo's birth, having been in the service of his father, who was a very different kind of man.

Father Cristoforo looked at him as he passed, saluted him, and was about to go forward; but the old man approached with a mysterious air, put his forefinger on his lips, and then beckoned to him to accompany him into a dark passage, where, in an undertone, he said, "Father, I have heard all, and I want to speak to you."

"Speak, then, at once, my good man."

"Not here! woe to us if the master saw us! But I can learn much, and will try to come to-morrow to the convent."

"Is there some project?"

"Something's in the wind, that's certain: I had already suspected it: but now I will be on the watch, and will find out all. Leave it to me. I happen to see and hear things—strange things! I am in a house!—But I wish to save my soul."

"God bless you!" said the friar, softly pronouncing the benediction, as he laid his hand on the servant's head, who, though much older than himself, bent before him with the respect of a son. "God will reward you," continued the friar; "don't fail to come to me to-morrow."

"I will be sure to come," replied the servant; "but do you go quickly, and for Heaven's sake don't betray me." The old man pointed to the door, and the friar departed without further delay.

In the mean time plans had been proposed and debated in Lucia's cottage, with which it is necessary to acquaint the reader. After the departure of the friar, the three friends remained some time silent; Lucia, with a sorrowful heart, preparing the dinner; Renzo irresolute, and changing his position every moment, to avoid the sight of her mournful face, yet without heart to leave her; Agnese, apparently intent upon the reel she was winding, though, in fact, she was deliberating upon a plan; and when she thought it sufficiently matured, she broke the silence with these words:

"Listen, my children. If you have as much courage and dexterity as is required; if you will trust your mother, I will undertake to get you out of this difficulty, better, perhaps, and more quickly than Father Cristoforo, though he is such a man." Lucia stopped and looked at her mother with a face more expressive of wonder than of confidence in so magnificent a promise; and Renzo

hastily exclaimed, "Courage? dexterity?—tell me, tell me what can we do?"

"If you were married," continued Agnese, "it would be the great difficulty out of the way—wouldn't it? and couldn't we easily find a remedy for all the rest?"

"Is there any doubt?" said Renzo: "if we were only married! One may live anywhere; and, at Bergamo, not far from here, a silk-weaver would be received with open arms. You know how often my cousin Bortolo has wanted me to go and live with him, that I might make a fortune, as he has done; and if I have never listened to him, it is—you know, because my heart was here. Once married, we would all go thither together, and live in blessed peace, out of this villain's reach, and far from the temptation to do a rash deed. Isn't it true, Lucia?"

"Yes," said Lucia; "but how?"

"As I have told you," replied Agnese. "Be bold and expert, and the thing is easy."

"Easy!" at the same moment exclaimed the two lovers, to whom it had become so strangely and sadly difficult.

"Easy, if you know how to go about it," replied Agnese. "Listen attentively to me, and I will try to make you understand it. I have heard say, by people who ought to know, and I have seen it myself in one case, that to solemnize a marriage, a curate, of course, is necessary, but not his good-will or consent; it is enough if he is present."

"How can this be?" asked Renzo.

"Listen, and you shall hear. There must be two witnesses, nimble and well agreed. They must go to the priest; the point is to take him by surprise, that he mayn't have time to escape. The man says," Signor Curato, this is my wife;" the woman says, "Signor Curato, this is my husband." It is necessary that the curate and the witnesses hear it, and then the marriage is just as

valid and sacred as if the Pope had blessed it. When once the words are spoken, the curate may fret, and fume, and storm, but it will do no good; you are husband and wife."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Lucia.

"What!" said Agnese, "do you think I have learned nothing in the thirty years I was in the world before you? The thing is just as I told you; and a friend of mine is a proof of it, who, wishing to be married against the will of her parents, did as I was saying, and gained her end. The curate suspected it, and was on the watch; but they knew so well how to go about it, that they arrived just at the right moment, said the words, and became husband and wife; though she, poor thing! repented of it before three days were over."

It was, in fact, as Agnese had represented it; marriages contracted in this manner were then, and are even to this day, acknowledged valid.

"If it were true, Lucia!" said Renzo, fixing his eyes upon her with a look of imploring expectation.

"What! if it were true?" replied Agnese. "You think, then, I tell lies. I do my best for you, and am not believed: very well; get out of the difficulty as you can: I wash my hands of it."

"Ah, no! don't forsake us," cried Renzo. "I said so because it appeared too good a thing. I place myself in your hands, and will consider you as if you were really my mother."

These words instantly dispelled the momentary indignation of Agnese, and made her forget a resolution which, in reality, had only been in word.

"But why, then, mother," said Lucia, in her usual gentle manner, "why didn't this plan come into Father Cristoforo's mind?"

"Into his mind?" replied Agnese; "do you think it didn't come into his mind? But he wouldn't speak of it."

"And why?" demanded both the lovers simultaneously.

"Because, if you must know it, the friars think that it is not exactly a proper thing."

"How can it help standing firm, and being well done, when it *is* done?" said Renzo.

"How can I tell you?" replied Agnese. "Other people have made the law as they pleased, and we poor people can't understand all. And then, how many things—See; it is like giving a Christian a blow. It isn't right, but when it is once given, not even the Pope can recall it."

"If it isn't right," said Lucia, "we ought not to do it."

"What!" said Agnese, "would I give you advice contrary to the fear of God? If it were against the will of your parents, and to marry a rogue—but when I am satisfied, and it is to wed this youth, and he who makes all this disturbance is a villain, and the Signor Curato"—

"It is as clear as the sun," said Renzo.

"One need not speak to Father Cristoforo, before doing it," continued Agnese; "but when it is once done, and has well succeeded, what do you think the Father will say to you?—'Ah, daughter! it was a sad error, but it is done.' The friars, you know, must talk so. But trust me, in his heart he will be very well satisfied."

Without being able to answer such reasoning, Lucia did not think it appeared very convincing; but Renzo, quite encouraged, said, "Since it is thus, the thing is done."

"Gently," said Agnese. "The witnesses, where are they to be found? Then, how will you manage to get at the Signor Curato, who has been shut up in his house two days? And how make him stand when you do get at him? for though he is weighty enough naturally, I dare venture to say, when he sees you make your appearance in such a guise, he will become as nimble as a cat, and flee like the devil from holy water."

"I have found a way—I've found one," cried Renzo,

striking the table with his clenched hand, till he made the dinner-things quiver and rattle with the blow; and he proceeded to relate his design, which Agnese entirely approved.

"It is all confusion," said Lucia; "it is not perfectly honest. Till now we have always acted sincerely; let us go on in faith, and God will help us; Father Cristoforo said so. Do listen to his advice."

"Be guided by those who know better than you," said Agnese, gravely. "What need is there to ask advice? God bids us help ourselves, and then He will help us. We will tell the Father all about it when it is over."

"Lucia," said Renzo, "will you fail me now? Have we not done all like good Christians? Ought we not now to have been man and wife? Didn't the curate himself fix the day and hour? And whose fault is it, if we are now obliged to use a little cunning? No, no; you won't fail me I am going, and will come back with an answer."

It is said that trouble sharpens the wit; and Renzo, who, in the upright and straightforward path he had hitherto followed, had never had occasion to sharpen his in any great degree, had, in this instance, planned a design that would have done honor to a lawyer. He went directly, as he had purposed, to a cottage near at hand, belonging to a certain Tonio, whom he found busy in the kitchen. The mother, brother, and wife of Tonio were seated at the table; and three or four little children stood around, waiting till the gruel should be ready to pour out. While Renzo was exchanging salutations with the family, Tonio poured the polenta into the wooden trencher that stood ready to receive it, and it looked like a little moon in a large circle of vapor. Nevertheless, the women courteously said to Renzo, "Will you take some with us?"—a compliment that the Lombard peasant never fails to pay to any one who finds

him at a meal, even though the visitor were a rich glutton just risen from table, and he were at the last mouthful.

"Thank you," replied Renzo; "I only came to say a word or two to Tonio; and if you like, Tonio, not to disturb your family, we can go dine at the inn, and talk there." This proposal was as acceptable to Tonio as it was unexpected; and the women, not unwillingly, saw one competitor for the polenta removed.

Arrived at the village inn, they sat down at their ease, perfectly alone, since the prevailing poverty had banished all the usual frequenters of this scene of mirth and joviality. They called for the little that was to be had, and having emptied a glass of wine, Renzo addressed Tonio with an air of mystery, "If you will do me a small favor, I will do you a great one."

"What is it?—tell me! I'm at your service," replied Tonio, pouring out another glass: "I'm ready to go into the fire for you to-day."

"You are in debt twenty-five livres to the Signor Curato for the rent of his field that you worked last year."

"Ah, Renzo, Renzo! you've spoiled your kindness. Why did you remind me of it now? You've put to flight all my good will toward you."

"If I reminded you of your debt," said Renzo, "it is because I intend, if you like, to give you the means of paying it."

"Do you really mean so?"

"I do really. Well, are you content?"

"Content? I should think so, indeed! if it were for no other reason than to get rid of those tormenting looks and shakes of the head the Signor Curato gives me every time I meet him."

"Well, if you'll do me a little service, the twenty-five livres are ready."

"With all my heart; go on," said the surprised Tonio.

"But!" said Renzo, laying his finger across his lips.

"Need you tell me that? You know me."

"The Signor Curato has been starting some absurd objections, to delay my marriage. They tell me for certain, that if we go before him with two witnesses, and I say, 'This is my wife'; and Lucia, 'This is my husband'; the marriage is valid. Do you understand me?"

"You want me to go as a witness?"

"Yes."

"And you'll pay the twenty-five livres for me?"

"That is what I mean."

"He's a goose that would fail."

"But we must find another witness."

"I have him! That young clownish brother of mine, Gervase, will do anything I bid him. You'll pay him with something to drink?"

"And to eat, too," replied Renzo. "We'll bring him here to make merry with us. But will he know what to do?"

"I'll teach him. You know I have got his share of brains."

"To-morrow!"

"Well."

"Toward evening"—

"Very well."

"But if your wife questions you, as without doubt she will"—

"I owe my wife some lies, and so many that I don't know if I shall ever manage to balance the account. I'll find some idle story to put her heart at rest, I warrant you."

"To-morrow," said Renzo, "we will make arrangements, that everything may go on smoothly."

In the mean while, Agnese had been vainly endeavoring to convince her daughter. To every argument,

Lucia opposed one side or other of her dilemma: "Either the thing is wrong, and we ought not to do it, or it is not wrong, and why not tell it to Father Cristoforo?"

Renzo arrived quite triumphant, and reported his success.

Lucia shook her head, doubtfully; but the two enthusiasts paid little attention, as one heeds not a child when one despairs of making it understand all the reasons of a thing, and determines to induce it by entreaties or authority to do as it is required.

"It goes well," said Agnese, "very well; but—you haven't thought of everything."

"What is wanting?" replied Renzo.

"Perpetua!—you haven't thought of Perpetua! She will admit Tonio and his brother well enough, but you—you two—just think! You will have to keep her at a distance, as one keeps a boy from a pear-tree full of ripe fruit."

"How shall we manage?" said Renzo, beginning to think.

"See, now! I have thought of that too; I will go with you; and I have a secret that will draw her away and engage her, so that she shan't see you, and you can go in. I'll call her out, and will touch a chord—You shall see."

"Bless you!" exclaimed Renzo; "I always said you are our help in everything."

"But all this is of no use," said Agnese, "unless we can persuade Lucia, who persists in saying it is a sin."

Renzo brought in all his eloquence to his aid, but Lucia continued immovable.

"I cannot answer all your arguments," said she; "but I see that, to do what you want, we shall be obliged to use a great deal of disguise, falsehood, and deceit. Ah, Renzo! we didn't begin so. I wish to be your wife"—and she could never pronounce this word, or give ex-

pression to this desire without a deep flush overspreading her cheek—"I wish to be your wife, but in the right way—in the fear of God, at the altar. Let us leave all to Him who is above. Do you think He cannot find means to help us better than we, with all these deceitful ways? And why make a mystery of it to Father Cristoforo?"

The dispute was still prolonged, and seemed not likely to come to a speedy conclusion, when the hasty tread of sandals, and the sound of a rustling cassock, announced the approach of Father Cristoforo. There was instant silence, and Agnese had barely time to whisper in Lucia's ear, "Be sure you say nothing about it."

CHAPTER VII

DON RODRIGO'S PLAN

FATHER CRISTOFORO arrived with the air of a good general, who—having lost an important battle, without any fault on his part, distressed, but not discouraged; thoughtful, but not confounded; retreating, but not put to flight—turns his steps where necessity calls for his presence.

"Peace be with you!" said he, as he entered. "There is nothing to hope from man; you have therefore more need to trust in God, and I have already had a pledge of His protection."

Although none of the party had anticipated much from Father Cristoforo's attempt, yet the melancholy certainty came as a blow upon them all. Their heads involuntarily drooped, but anger quickly prevailed over depression in Renzo's mind.

"I should like to know," said he, gnashing his teeth and raising his voice as he had never before done in the presence of Father Cristoforo—"I should like to know

what reasons this dog gives for saying that my bride should not be my bride."

"Poor Renzo!" replied the friar, with a look and accent of pity that kindly recommended peaceableness; "if the powerful, who do such deeds of injustice, were always obliged to give their reasons, things would not be as they are."

"Did the dog then say that he would not, *because* he would not?"

"He didn't even say that, my poor fellow! It would be something, if, to commit iniquity, they were obliged openly to confess it."

"But he must have told you something; what did this infernal firebrand say?"

"I heard his words, but I cannot repeat them to you. Ask no more. He neither mentioned the name of this innocent, nor your own; he did not even appear to know you, nor did he say he designed anything; but I understood too well that he is immovable. But trust in God, you poor creatures!" turning to Agnese and Lucia, "don't give up in despair! And you, Renzo—oh! believe me, I can put myself in your place; I can feel what passes in your heart. But, patience; it is a poor word, a bitter one to those who have no faith; but you—will you not allow God one day, two days, or whatever time He may please to take to clear you and give you justice? Leave Him to work, Renzo; and, believe me, I already have a clew that may lead to something for your help. I can not tell you more at present. To-morrow I shall not come here; I must be at the convent all day, for you. You, Renzo, try to come to me; or if, by any unforeseen accident, you can not, send a trustworthy man or a lad of discretion, by whom I may let you know what may happen. It grows dark. I shall have to make haste to reach the convent. Faith, courage, and good night!"

Having said this, he hastily left them, and made his

way rapidly along a crooked, stony by-path, that he might not be late at the convent, and run the risk of a severe reprimand, or, what would have grieved him more, the infliction of a penance, which might have disabled him on the morrow for any undertaking which the service of his protégés might require.

"Did you hear what he said about—I don't know what —about a clew that he held in his hand to help us?" said Lucia. "It is best to trust in him; he is a man who, if he promises ten"—

"I know there is not his like," interrupted Agnese; "but he ought to have spoken more clearly, or, at least, taken me aside and told me what it was."

"Idle prating! I'll put an end to it, that I will!" interrupted Renzo, in his turn, as he paced furiously up and down the room, with a look and tone that left no doubt as to the meaning of his words.

"Oh, Renzo!" exclaimed Lucia.

"What do you mean?" cried Agnese.

"Why need I tell you? I'll put an end to it! Though he has a hundred, a thousand devils in his soul, he's flesh and blood, after all."

"No, no! for Heaven's sake!" began Lucia, but tears choked her utterance.

"This is not proper language, even in jest," replied Agnese.

"In jest!" cried Renzo, planting himself directly before Agnese, as she sat, and fixing on her his fierce eyes. "In jest! you shall see whether I am in jest or not."

"Ah, no, for pity's sake, don't say so; don't look so furious! No, no, I can not bear to see you thus," exclaimed Lucia, weeping, and joining her hands in an attitude of earnest supplication; while Agnese repeatedly called him by name, and seized hold of his shoulders, his arms, and his hands, to pacify him. He stood immovable, thoughtful, almost overcome at the sight of

Lucia's imploring countenance; then suddenly gazed at her sternly, drew back, stretched out his arm, and pointing with his finger toward her, burst forth: "Her! yes, he wants *her!* He must die!"

"And *I*, what harm have I done you, that you should kill *me?*" said Lucia, throwing herself on her knees.

"You!" said he, with a voice expressive of anger, though of a far different nature; "you! what good do you wish me? What proof have you given me? Haven't I begged, and begged, and begged? Have I been able to obtain"—

"Yes, yes," replied she, precipitately; "I will go to the curate's to-morrow; I will go now, if you like. Only be yourself again, I will go."

"You promise me?" said Renzo, his voice and expression rendered in an instant more human.

"I promise you."

"You have promised me?"

"Thanks be to Thee, O Lord!" exclaimed Agnese, doubly satisfied.

"I *have* promised you," replied Lucia, with an accent of timid and affectionate reproof; "but you have also promised not to make any disturbance—to submit yourself to Father"—

"Come, now, for whose sake did I get into a passion? Do you want to draw back? And will you oblige me to do a rash thing?"

"No, no," said Lucia, ready to relapse into her former fears. "I have promised, and I will not draw back. But see how you have made me promise; God forbid that"—

"Why will you prophesy evil, Lucia? God knows we do no wrong to anybody."

"Promise me, at least, this shall be the last time."

"I promise you, upon my word."

"But this once you will stand by him," said Agnese.

The night was passed by all three as well as could be expected, considering that it followed a day of such excitement and misfortune, and preceded one fixed upon for an important undertaking of doubtful issue. Renzo made his appearance early the next morning, and concerted with the women, or rather with Agnese, the grand operations of the evening.

"Are you going down to the convent to see Father Cristoforo, as he bade you last night?" said Agnese to Renzo.

"Not I," replied he; "you know what discerning eyes the Father has; he will read in my looks, as if it were written in a book, that there's something in the wind; and if he begins to question me, I can't get off it easily. And besides, I must stay here to arrange matters. It will be better for you to send somebody."

"I will send Menico."

"Very well," replied Renzo; and he set off to arrange matters, as he had said.

Agnese went to a neighboring cottage to ask for Menico, a sprightly and very sensible lad for his age, who, through the medium of cousins and sisters-in-law, had come to be a sort of nephew to the dame. She asked his parents for him, as for a loan, and begged she might keep him the whole day, "for a particular service," said she. Having obtained permission, she led him to her kitchen, gave him his breakfast, and bade him go to Pescarenico, and present himself to Father Cristoforo, who would send him back with a message at the right time. "Father Cristoforo, that fine old man, you know, with a white beard, who is called the Saint."

"I understand," said Menico; "he who speaks so kindly to the children, and sometimes gives them pictures."

"Just so, Menico. And if he bids you wait some time at the convent, don't wander away; and be sure you don't go with other boys to the lake to throw stones into

the water, nor to watch them fish, nor to play with the nets hung up to dry, nor"—

"Poh, aunt; I am no longer a child."

"Well, be prudent. Go, and behave well."

In the course of this long morning many strange things happened, which aroused not a little suspicion in the already disturbed minds of Agnese and Lucia. A beggar, of somewhat dark and sinister aspect, came and asked alms, in God's name, at the same time looking narrowly around. A piece of bread was given him, which he received, and placed in his basket, with ill-dissembled indifference. After his departure, they continued to mark, from time to time, other suspicious and strange figures.

The reader must be told something more definite about these mysterious wanderers; and to relate it in order, we must turn back a step or two, and find Don Rodrigo, whom we left yesterday after dinner by himself, in one of the rooms of his palace, after the departure of Father Cristoforo.

Don Rodrigo, as we have said, paced to and fro with long strides, surrounded on all sides by the family portraits of many generations. On the one hand was a matron, the terror of her maids; on the other, an abbot, the terror of his monks; in short, they were all persons who had been objects of terror while alive, and who now inspired dread by their likenesses. In the presence of such remembrances, Don Rodrigo became enraged and ashamed, as he reflected that a friar had dared to come to him with the parable of Nathan; and his mind could find no peace. At last, for the sake of doing something, he called a servant, and desired him to make an apology for him to the company, and to say that he was detained by urgent business. The servant returned with the intelligence that the gentlemen, having left their compliments, had taken their leave.

"And Count Attilio?" asked Don Rodrigo.

"He left with the gentlemen, most illustrious Signor."

"Very well; six followers to accompany me—quickly! my sword, cloak, and hat, immediately!"

The servant replied by a bow, and withdrew, returning shortly with a rich sword, which his master buckled on, a cloak which he threw over his shoulders, and a hat, ornamented with lofty plumes, which he placed on his head, and fastened with a haughty air. He then moved forward, and found the six bravoes at the door, completely armed, who, making way for him with a low bow, followed as his train.

At night he returned to his palace, and found that Count Attilio had just arrived; and they sat down to supper together, Don Rodrigo buried in thought.

"Cousin, when will you pay your wager?" asked Count Attilio, in a malicious, and at the same time rallying, tone, as soon as the table was cleared, and the servants had departed.

"Saint Martin has not yet passed."

"Well, remember you will have to pay it soon, and, my cousin, I am so certain of having won my wager, that I am ready to lay another."

"What?"

"I mean, in short, that this friar has converted you."

"It is a mere fancy of your own."

"Converted, cousin; converted, I say. I, for my part, am delighted at it. What a fine sight it will be to see you a penitent, with downcast eyes! And what triumph for this Father! How proudly he must have returned to the convent! You are not such fish as they catch every day, nor in every net. You may be sure they will bring you forward as an example; and when you go on a mission to some little distance, they will talk of your acts. I can fancy I hear them." And, speaking through his nose, accompanying the words with caricatured gestures, he continued, in a sermon-like tone: "'In a certain part

of the world, which from motives of high respect we forbear to name, there lived, my dear hearers, and there still lives, a dissolute gentleman, the friend of women rather than of good men, who, accustomed to make no distinctions, had set his eyes upon' "—

"That will do," interrupted Don Rodrigo, half amused and half annoyed; "if you wish to repeat the wager, I am ready, too."

"Indeed! perhaps, then *you* have converted the Father?"

"Don't talk to me about him: and as to the bet, Saint Martin will decide."

Next morning, Don Rodrigo was himself again. The remembrance of his late almost triumphant walk, of the profound salutations, and the receptions he had met with, together with the rallying of his cousin, had contributed not a little to renew his former spirit. Hardly risen, he sent for Griso.

"Griso!" said Don Rodrigo, "in this emergency it will be seen what you are worth. Before to-morrow, Lucia must be in this palace."

"It shall never be said that Griso shrank from the command of his noble protector."

"Take as many men as you want, dispose and order them as you think best, only let the thing succeed well. But, above all, be sure you do her no harm."

"Signor, a little fright, that she may not make too much noise. One cannot do less."

"Fear, I see, is inevitable. But don't touch a hair of her head; and, above all, treat her with the greatest respect. Do you understand?"

"Signor, I could not pluck a flower from its stalk and bring it to your lordship without touching it a little. But I will do no more than is necessary."

"Beware you do not. And how will you manage?"

"I was thinking, Signor. It is fortunate that the house

is at the end of the village. We shall want a place to conceal ourselves in; and at a little distance there's that uninhabited building in the middle of the fields, said to be haunted by witches; but it is not Saturday, and I don't care for them. The villagers are so superstitious, they wouldn't enter it any night of the week for a treasure, so we may safely dispose ourselves there, without any fear of being disturbed in our plans."

"Very good: and what then?"

Here Griso went on to propose, and Don Rodrigo to discuss, till they had, together, concerted a way to bring the enterprise to an end without a trace of its authors remaining.

"Leave it all to me," said Griso, bowing with an obsequious and ostentatious air, as he departed.

The morning was spent in reconnoitering the neighborhood. The feigned beggar who had intruded himself so pertinaciously into Agnese's humble cottage was no other than Griso, who had come to get an idea of the plan of the house; the pretended travelers were his vile followers, who, operating under his orders, required a less minute acquaintance with the place.

When they returned to the palace, Griso made his report, arranged definitely the plan of the enterprise, assigned to each his different part, and gave his instructions. All this could not be transacted without the old servant's observation, who, with his eyes and ears constantly on the alert, discovered that they were plotting some great undertaking. The old man, although he well knew what a dangerous game he was playing, and feared, besides, that he was doing no efficient service, yet failed not to fulfil his engagement. He went out, under pretence of taking the air, and proceeded in great haste to the convent, to give Father Cristoforo the promised information. Shortly afterward, a large party of bravoes was sent out, one or two at a time, that they might not

appear to be one company. Griso made up the rear, and then nothing remained behind but a litter, which was to be brought to the place of rendezvous after dark. When they were all assembled there, Griso despatched three of them to the inn in the village; one was to place himself at the door, to watch the movements in the street, and to give notice when all the inhabitants had retired to rest; the other two were to remain inside, gaming and drinking, as if enjoying themselves, but were also to be on the lookout, if anything was to be seen. Griso, with the body of the troop, waited in ambuscade till the time of action should arrive.

The poor old man was still on his way, the three scouts had arrived at their post, and the sun was setting, when Renzo entered the cottage, and said to the women: "Tonio and Gervase are here outside: I am going with them to sup at the inn; and at the sound of the Ave Maria, we will come to fetch you. Come, Lucia, courage; all depends upon a moment." Lucia sighed, and replied "Oh, yes, courage!" with a tone that belied her words.

When Renzo and his two companions reached the inn, they found the bravo already on the watch, leaning with his back against the jamb of the doorway, so as to occupy half its width, his arms folded across his breast. When Renzo, the foremost of the three, approached him and seemed prepared to enter, the bravo fixed his eyes upon him, without attempting to make way; but the youth, intent on avoiding any questions or disputes, grazing the other doorpost, pushed, side foremost, through the opening left by this caryatid.

Renzo, suspicious and doubtful, looked at his friends, as if seeking in their countenances an interpretation of all this behavior; but their countenances indicated nothing beyond a good appetite. The landlord approached to receive his orders, and Renzo made him accompany him into an adjoining room, and ordered some supper.

"Who are those strangers?" he asked in a low voice, when his host returned with a coarse tablecloth under his arm and a bottle in his hand.

"I don't know them," replied the host, spreading the tablecloth.

"What! none of them?"

"You know," replied he, again smoothing the cloth on the table with both his hands, "that the first rule of our business is not to pry into other people's affairs; so that even our women are not inquisitive. All we care for is whether our customers are honest fellows. But, come! I will bring you a dish of hash, the like of which you've never tasted."

"How do you know?"— Renzo was beginning; but the landlord, already on his way to the kitchen, paid no attention to his inquiry. Here, while he was taking up the stew-pan, the bravo who had eyed our youth so closely accosted the host, and said, in an undertone, "Who are those fellows?"

"Worthy people of the village," he replied, pouring the hash into the dish.

"Very well; but what are they called? Who are they?" he insisted.

"One is called Renzo," replied the host, speaking in a low voice; "a worthy youth—a silk weaver, who understands his business well. The other is a peasant of the name of Tonio, a good, jovial comrade; pity he has so little; he'd spend it all here. The third is a simpleton, who eats willingly whatever is set before him."

The supper was not very blithesome. Renzo, anxious and uneasy at the strange behavior of the incognitos, was impatient for the time of departure. He spoke in an undertone, out of respect to the strangers, and in broken and hurried words.

Supper being over, and the bill having been paid by the one who had done the least execution, they had again

to pass under the scrutinizing eyes of the three bravoes, who gazed earnestly at Renzo, as they had done on his entrance.

When Renzo had finally arrived at Lucia's cottage, the night had quite closed in. Lucia had had an evil dream; and Agnese was buried in thought, and could hardly find words to encourage her daughter. At Renzo's smothered knock, Lucia was seized with such terror, that, at the moment, she resolved to suffer anything, to be separated from him forever, rather than execute the resolutions she had made; but when he had stood before her, and had said, "Here I am, let us go;" when all were ready to accompany him without hesitation, as a fixed and irrevocable thing, Lucia had neither time nor heart to interpose difficulties.

Very softly, in the dark, and with slow steps, they passed the threshold, and took the road that led out of the village. The shorter way would have been to go through it, to reach Don Abbondio's house, at the other end; but they chose the longer course, as being the more retired. After passing along little narrow roads that ran between gardens and fields, they arrived near the house, and here they divided. The two lovers remained hidden behind a corner of the building; Agnese was with them, but stood a little forward, that she might be able to run in time to meet Perpetua, and take possession of her. Tonio, with his blockhead of a brother, Gervase, who knew how to do nothing by himself, but without whom nothing could be done, hastened boldly forward and knocked at the door.

"Who's there, at such an hour?" cried the voice of Perpetua from a window. "There's nobody ill, that I know of. But, perhaps, some accident has happened?"

"It is I," replied Tonio, "with my brother; we want to speak to the Signor Curato."

"Is this an hour for Christians?" replied Perpetua,

sharply. "You've no consideration. Come again to-morrow."

"Listen: I'll come again or not, just as you like; I've scraped together nobody knows how much money, and came to settle that little debt you know of. Here, I have five-and-twenty fine new berlinghe; but if one cannot pay, never mind, I know well enough how to spend these, and I'll come again, when I've got together some more."

"Wait, wait! I'll go, and be back in a moment. But why come at such an hour?"

"If you can change the hour, I've no objection; as for me, here I am; and if you don't want me, I'll go."

"No, no; wait a moment; I'll be back with the answer directly."

So saying, she shut the window again. At this instant, Agnese left the lovers, and saying, in a low voice, to Lucia, "Courage! it is but a moment; it's only like drawing a tooth," joined the two brothers at the door, and began gossiping with Tonio, so that, when Perpetua should return and see her, she might think she was just passing by, and that Tonio had detained her for a moment.

CHAPTER VIII

"THE BEST-LAID SCHEMES O' MICE AND MEN"

DON ABBONDIO sat in his armchair, in a room upstairs, with a small volume lying open before him, just as Perpetua entered to bring him the message.

The reader must know that Don Abbondio was very fond of reading a little every day; and a neighboring curate, who possessed something of a library, lent him one book after another, always taking the first that came to hand. The work with which Don Abbondio was now

engaged was a panegyric in honor of San Carlo, which had been delivered with much earnestness, and listened to with great admiration, in the cathedral of Milan, two years before. The saint had been compared, on account of his love of study, to Archimedes, and at this point, Perpetua announced the visit of Tonio.

"At this hour!" exclaimed Don Abbondio, also, naturally enough.

"What would you have, sir? They have no consideration, indeed; but if you don't take him when you can get him"—

"If I don't take him now, who knows when I can? Let him come in. Hey! Perpetua, are you quite sure it *is* Tonio?"

"Diavolo!" replied Perpetua; and going downstairs, she opened the door, and said, "Where are you?" Tonio advanced, and, at the same moment, Agnese also showed herself, and saluted Perpetua by name.

"Good evening, Agnese," said Perpetua; "where are you coming from at this hour?"

"I am coming from...." mentioning a neighboring village. "And if you knew"— continued she; "I've been kept late just for your sake."

"What for?" asked Perpetua; and turning to the two brothers, "Go in," said she, "and I'll follow."

"Because," replied Agnese, "a gossiping woman, who knows nothing about the matter—would you believe it? —persists in saying that you were not married to Beppo Suolavecchia, nor to Anselmo Lunghigna, because they wouldn't have you! I maintained that you had refused both one and the other."

"To be sure. Oh, what a false-tongued woman! Who is she?"

"Don't ask me; I don't want to make mischief."

"You shall tell me; you must tell me. I say she's a liar."

"Well, you cannot think how vexed I was that I didn't know the whole history, that I might have put her down."

"It is an abominable falsehood," said Perpetua—"a most infamous falsehood! As to Beppo, everybody knows, and might have seen—Hey! Tonio; just close the door, and go upstairs till I come."

Tonio assented from within, and Perpetua continued her eager relation. In front of Don Abbondio's door, a narrow street ran between two cottages, but continued straight only the length of the buildings, and then turned into the fields. Agnese went forward along this street, as if she would go a little aside to speak more freely, and Perpetua followed. When they had turned the corner, and reached a spot whence they could no longer see what happened before Don Abbondio's house, Agnese coughed loudly. This was the signal; Renzo heard it, he and Lucia turned the corner together on tiptoe, crept very softly close along the wall, reached the door, and gently pushed it open; quiet, and stooping low, they were soon in the passage; and here the two brothers were waiting for them. Renzo very gently let down the latch of the door, and all four ascended the stairs, making hardly noise enough for two. On reaching the landing, the two brothers advanced toward the door of the room at the side of the staircase, and the lovers stood close against the wall.

"*Deo gratias*," said Tonio, in an explanatory tone.

"Eh, Tonio! is it you? Come in!" replied the voice within.

Tonio opened the door, barely wide enough to admit himself and his brother one at a time.

Don Abbondio was seated, as we have said, in an old armchair; he was enveloped in an antiquated dressing-gown, and his head was buried in a shabby cap, the shape of a tiara, which, by the faint light of a small lamp, formed a sort of cornice all round his face.

"Aha!" was his salutation, as he took off his spectacles, and laid them on his book.

"The Signor Curato will say I am come very late," said Tonio, with a low bow, which Gervase awkwardly imitated.

"Certainly, it is late—late every way. Don't you know I am ill?"

"I'm very sorry for it."

"You must have heard I was ill, and didn't know when I should be able to see anybody. But why have you brought this boy with you?"

"For company, Signor Curato."

"Very well; let us see."

"Here are twenty-five new berlinghe, with the figure of Saint Ambrose on horseback," said Tonio drawing a little parcel out of his pocket.

"Let us see," said Don Abbondio; and he took the parcel, put on his spectacles again, opened it, took out the money, turned them over and over, counted them, and found them irreproachable.

"Now, Signor Curato, you will give me Tecla's necklace."

"You are right," replied Don Abbondio; and going to a cupboard, he took out a key, opened one of the doors, and filling up the aperture with his person, introduced his head to see, and his arm to reach, the pledge; then, drawing it out, he shut the cupboard, unwrapped the paper, and saying, "Is that right?" folded it up again, and handed it to Tonio.

"Now," said Tonio, "will you please to put it in black and white?"

"Not satisfied yet!" said Don Abbondio. "I declare they know everything. Eh! how suspicious the world has become! Don't you trust me?"

"What! Signor Curato! Don't I trust you? You do me wrong. But as my name is in your black books, on

the debtor's side, then, since you have had the trouble of writing once, so"—

"Well, well!" interrupted Don Abbondio; and muttering between his teeth, he drew out one of the table drawers, took thence pen, ink, and paper, and began to write, repeating the words aloud, as they came from his pen. Renzo took Lucia's arm, pressing it in an encouraging manner, and went forward, almost dragging her along; for she trembled to such a degree that without his help she must have sunk to the ground. Entering very softly, on tiptoe, and holding their breath, they placed themselves behind the two brothers. In the mean time, Don Abbondio, having finished writing, read over the paper attentively, without raising his eyes; he then folded it up, saying, "Are you content now?" and taking off his spectacles with one hand, handed the paper to Tonio with the other, and looked up. Tonio, extending his right hand to receive it, retired on one side, and Gervase, at a sign from him, on the other; and behold! as at the shifting of a scene, Renzo and Lucia stood between them.

Don Abbondio saw indistinctly—saw clearly; was terrified, astonished, enraged, buried in thought, came to a resolution; and all this, while Renzo uttered the words, "Signor Curato, in the presence of these witnesses, this is my wife!" But before Lucia's lips could form the reply, Don Abbondio dropped the receipt, seized the lamp with his left hand, and raised it in the air, caught hold of the cloth with his right, and dragged it furiously off the table, bringing to the ground in its fall, book, paper, inkstand, and sandbox; and springing between the chair and the table, advanced toward Lucia. The poor girl, with her sweet, gentle voice, trembling violently, had hardly uttered the words, "And this"— when Don Abbondio threw the cloth rudely over her head and face, to prevent her pronouncing the entire formula. Then, letting the light fall from his other hand, he employed both

to wrap the cloth round her face, till she was wellnigh smothered, shouting in the mean while: "Perpetua!—Perpetua!—treachery—help!" The light, just glimmering on the ground, threw a dim and flickering ray upon Lucia, who, in utter consternation, made no attempt to disengage herself, and might be compared to a statue sculptured in chalk, over which the artificer had thrown a wet cloth. When the light went out, Don Abbondio quitted the poor girl, and went groping about to find the door that opened into an inner room; and having reached it, he entered and shut himself in, unceasingly exclaiming: "Perpetua! treachery, help!"

In the other room all was confusion: Renzo, seeking to lay hold of the curate, and feeling with his hands, as if playing at blind-man's-buff, had reached the door, and kicking against it, was crying: "Open, open; don't make such a noise!" Lucia, calling to Renzo, in a feeble voice, said, beseechingly, "Let us go, let us go, for God's sake!" Tonio was crawling on his knees, and feeling with his hands on the ground to recover his lost receipt. The terrified Gervase was crying and jumping about, and seeking for the door of the stairs.

The besieged, finding that the enemy gave no signs of abandoning the enterprise, opened a window that looked into the churchyard, and shouted out: "Help! help!" Adjoining the lateral wall of the church, on the side next the parsonage, was a small dwelling where the sexton slept. Aroused by this unusual cry, he sprang up in his bed, jumped out in great haste, threw open the sash of his little window, put his head out and cried, "What's the matter?"

"Run, Ambrogio! help! people in the house!" answered Don Abbondio. "Coming directly," he replied, as he drew in his head and shut the window; and although half asleep and more than half terrified, an expedient quickly occurred to him that would bring more aid than

had been asked, without dragging *him* into the affray, whatever it might be. Seizing his breeches that lay upon the bed, he tucked them under his arm like a gala hat, and bounding downstairs by a little wooden ladder, ran to the belfry, caught hold of the rope that was attached to the larger of the two bells, and pulled vigorously.

Ton, ton, ton, ton; the peasant sprang up in his bed; the boy stretched in the hay-loft listened eagerly, and leaped to his feet. "What's the matter? what's the matter? The bell's ringing! Fire? Thieves? Banditti?" Many of the women advised—begged their husbands not to stir—to let others run; some got up and went to the window; those who were cowards, as if yielding to entreaty, quietly slipped under the bedclothes again; while the more inquisitive and courageous sprang up and armed themselves with pitchforks and pistols, to run to the uproar; others waited to see the end.

But before these were all ready, and even before they were well awake, the noise had reached the ears, and arrested the attention, of some others not very far distant, who were both dressed and on their feet; the bravoes in one place; Agnese and Perpetua in another.

The three bravoes at the inn, as soon as they had seen all the doors shut and the street deserted, went out, pretending to be going some distance; but they only quietly took a short turn in the village to be assured that all had retired to rest; and in fact, they met not one living creature, nor heard the least noise. They also passed, still more softly, before Lucia's little cottage, which was the quietest of all, since by that time no one was within. They then went direct to the old house, and reported their observations to Signor Griso. Hastily putting on a slouched hat, with a pilgrim's dress of sackcloth, scattered over with cockleshells, and taking in his hand a pilgrim's staff, he said: "Now let us act like good

bravoes; quiet, and attentive to orders." So saying, he moved forward, followed by the rest, and in a few moments reached the cottage by the opposite way to the one our little party had taken when setting out on their expedition.

With one bravo at his side, and the rest behind, Griso very slowly ascended the stairs, cursing in his heart every step that unluckily creaked. At last he reaches the top. He gently pushes the door that leads into the first room; it yields to his touch; he opens it a little and looks in; all is dark; he listens attentively, perchance he may hear a snoring, a breath, a stirring within; nothing. Forward then; he puts the lantern before his face, so as to see without being seen, he opens the door wide; perceives a bed; looks upon it; the bed is made and smooth, with the clothes turned down and arranged upon the pillow. He shrugs his shoulders, turns to his companions, beckons to them that he is going to look in the other room, and that they must keep quiet where they are; he goes forward, uses the same precautions, meets with the same success. "Whatever can this mean?" exclaimed he boldly: "some traitorous dog must have been acting as spy." They then began to look about them with less caution, and to pry into every corner, turning the house upside down.

While the party upstairs were thus engaged, the two who were on guard at the street-door heard hasty and repeated footsteps approaching along the road that led into the village, and imagining that whoever it was, he would pass by, they kept quiet, their ears, however, attentively on the watch. But behold! the footsteps stopped exactly at the door. It was Menico arriving in great haste, sent by Father Cristoforo to bid the two women, for Heaven's sake, to make their escape as quickly as possible from their cottage, and take refuge in the convent. He took hold of the handle of the latch, and felt

it shake in his hand, unfastened and broken open. Putting one foot inside with considerable suspicion, he felt himself seized in a moment by both arms, and heard two smothered voices, on his right and left, saying to him, in a threatening tone: "Hush! hold your tongue, or you die." But he uttered a shrill cry, upon which one of them struck him a blow, and the other showed a large knife to terrify him. Suddenly burst forth the first sound of the bell before described, and immediately after many thundering peals in quick succession. The villains let go of Menico's arms, gazed at each other's faces in mute astonishment, and then ran into the house where their companions were. Menico took to his legs, and fled, by way of the fields, toward the belfry, where he felt sure there would be some people assembled.

Let us return a step or two to find Agnese and Perpetua, whom we had just conducted round the corner of a certain road. Agnese had allured her companion as far away from Don Abbondio's house as possible, but all on a sudden the servant remembered that she had left the door open, and she wished to go back. Agnese was obliged to turn and walk with her, trying, however, to detain her whenever she saw her very eager in relating the issue of such and such courtships. She pretended to be paying very great attention, and every now and then, by way of showing that she was listening, or to animate the flagging conversation, would say: "Certainly: now I understand: that was capital: that is plain: and then? and he? and you?" while all the time she was keeping up a very different discourse in her own mind. Thus, with sundry pauses and various deviations from the straight path, they were brought back again within a very short distance from Don Abbondio's house, when they suddenly heard, echoing through the dead silence of night, the loud and disordered cry of Don Abbondio: "Help! help!"

"Mercy! what has happened?" cried Perpetua, beginning to run.

"What is it? what is it?" cried Agnese, holding her back by the gown.

"Wretch of a woman!" exclaimed Perpetua, pushing her away to free herself and to run. At this moment, distant and shrill, was heard the scream of Menico.

"Mercy!" cried Agnese also; and they ran off together. They had hardly gone a step, when the bell sounded one stroke, then two, three, and a succession of peals. Perpetua arrived first by two steps; while she raised her hand to the door to open it, behold! it was opened from within, and on the threshold stood Tonio, Gervase, Renzo, and Lucia, who, having found the stairs, had come down more rapidly than they went up.

"What's the matter? what's the matter?" demanded the panting Perpetua of the brothers; but they only replied with a violent push, and passed on. "And you! How! what are you doing here?" said she to the other two on recognizing them. But they too made their escape without answering her.

The betrothed—still only betrothed!—now fell in with Agnese, who arrived weary and out of breath. "Ah! here you are!" said she, hardly able to speak. "How has it gone? What is the bell ringing for? I thought I heard"—

"Home! home!" cried Renzo, "before anybody comes." And they moved forward; but at this moment Menico arrived, running as fast as his legs could carry him; and recognizing them, he threw himself in their way, and still all in a tremble and hardly able to draw his breath, exclaimed: "Where are you going? back, back! This way, to the convent."

"What is it?" asked Renzo. Lucia stood by, trembling and silent, in utter dismay.

"There are devils in your house," replied Menico, pant-

ing. "I saw them myself: they wanted to murder me; Father Cristoforo said so; and even you, Renzo, he said, were to come quickly—and besides, I saw them myself—it's providential you are all here—I will tell you the rest when we get out of the village."

Renzo, who had more of his senses about him than the rest, remembered that they had better make their escape one way or another before the crowds assembled; and that the best plan would be to do as Menico advised.

They had not gone more than fifty yards, when the crowd began to collect in the churchyard, and rapidly increased every moment. They looked inquiringly in each other's faces; every one had a question to ask, but no one could return an answer. Those who arrived first, ran to the church-door: it was locked. They then ran to the belfry outside; and one of them, putting his mouth to a very small window, a sort of loophole, cried, "Whatever is the matter?" As soon as Ambrogio recognized a known voice, he let go of the bellrope, and being assured by the buzz that many people had assembled, replied, "I'll open the door." Hastily slipping on the apparel he had carried under his arm, he went inside the church, and opened the door.

"What is all this hubbub?—What is it?—Where is it?—Who is it?"

"Why, who is it?" said Ambrogio, laying one hand on the door-post, and with the other holding up the habiliment he had put on in such haste: "What! don't yon know? People in the Signor Curato's house. Up, boys: help!" Hearing this, they all turned to the house, looked up, approached it in a body, looked up again, listened: all was quiet. Some ran to the street-door; it was shut and bolted; they glanced upward; not a window was open; not a whisper was to be heard.

"Who is within?—Ho! Hey!—Signor Curato!—Signor Curato!"

Don Abbondio, who hardly aware of the flight of the invaders, had retired from the window, and closed it, was obliged, when he heard himself called upon by the voice of the assembled people, to show himself again at the window; and when he saw the crowds that had come to his aid, he sorely repented having called them.

"What has happened?—What have they done to you?—Who are they?—Where are they?" burst forth from fifty voices at once.

"There's nobody here now; thank you: go home again."

"But who has been here?—Where are they gone?—What has happened?"

"Bad people, people who go about by night; but they're gone: go home again: there is no longer anything: another time, my children: I thank you for your kindness to me." So saying, he drew back, and shut the window. Some of the crowd began to grumble, some to joke, others to curse; some shrugged their shoulders and took their departure: when one arrived, endeavoring, but scarcely able to speak from want of breath. It was the person who lived in the house opposite Agnese's cottage, who having gone to the window at the noise, had seen in the courtyard the assembly of bravoes, when Griso was striving to reunite his scattered troops. On recovering his breath, he cried: "What are you doing here, my good fellows? the devil isn't here; he's down at the end of the village, at Agnese Mondella's house; armed men are within, who seem to be murdering a pilgrim; who knows what the devil is doing!"

"What?—what?—what?" and a tumultuous consultation began. "We must go.—We must see.—How many are there?—How many are we?—Who are we?—The constable! the constable!"

"I'm here," replied the constable from the middle of the crowd: "I'm here, but you must help me, you must

obey. Quick: where is the sexton? To the bell, to the bell. Quick! Somebody run to Lecco for help."

The tumult was at its greatest height, when another runner arrived who had seen Griso and his party going off in such haste, and cried in his turn: "Run, my good fellows! thieves or banditti, who are carrying off a pilgrim! they are already out of the village. On! after them!" At this information, they moved off in a body in great confusion toward Agnese's house, where traces of the recent invasion were manifest: the door opened, the locks torn off; but the invaders had disappeared.

Our fugitives walked a little way at a quick pace in silence, one or other occasionally looking back to see if they were followed, all of them wearied by the fatigue of the flight, by the anxiety and suspense they had endured, by grief at their ill-success, and by confused apprehensions of new and unknown danger. Reaching a deserted field, and not hearing a whisper around, they slackened their pace, and Agnese, taking breath, was the first to break the silence, by asking of Renzo how matters had gone, and of Menico, what was the demon in their house. Renzo briefly related his melancholy story; and then they turned to the child, who informed them more expressly of the Father's advice, and narrated what he had himself witnessed and the hazards he had run, which too surely confirmed the advice. His auditors understood more of this than did the speaker; they were seized with new horror at the discovery, and for a moment paused in their walk, exchanging looks of fear; then they laid their hands on the head and on the shoulders of the boy, as if to caress him, and tacitly to thank him for having been to them a guardian angel. "Now go home, that your family may not be anxious about you any longer," said Agnese. Renzo gave him a new berlinga, and begged him to say nothing of the message he had brought from the Father: Lucia again caressed him,

bade him farewell with a sorrowful voice, and the boy, almost overcome, wished them good-by, and turned back. The melancholy trio continued their walk, the women taking the lead, and Renzo behind to act as guard. They continued their walk in silence, and, in a little while, reached the square before the church of the convent.

Renzo advanced to the door of the church, and gently pushed it open. The moon that entered through the aperture fell upon the pale face and silvery beard of Father Cristoforo, who was standing here expecting them; and having seen that no one was missing, "God be praised!" said he, beckoning to them to enter. When they were inside, Father Cristoforo very softly shut the door, and said:

"My children, thank God, who has delivered you from so great a danger! Perhaps at this moment"— and here he began to explain more fully what he had hinted by the little messenger, little suspecting that they knew more than he, and supposing that Menico had found them quiet in their own house, before the arrival of the ruffians. Nobody undeceived him, not even Lucia, whose conscience, however, was all the while secretly reproaching her for practising dissimulation with so good a man; but it was a night of embarrassment and dissimulation.

"After this," he continued, "you must feel, my children, that the village is no longer safe for you. It is yours, you were born there, and you have done no wrong to anyone; but God wills it so. It is a trial, my children; bear it with patience and faith, without indulging in rancor, and rest assured there will come a day when you will think yourselves happy that this has occurred. I have thought of a refuge for you, for the present. Soon, I hope, you may be able to return in safety to your own house; at any rate, God will provide what is best for you; and I assure you, I will be careful not to prove unworthy of the favor He has bestowed upon me, in choosing me

as His minister, in the service of you, His poor, yet loved afflicted ones. You," he continued, turning to the two women, "can stay at..... There you will be far enough from every danger, and at the same time not far from your own home. Seek out our convent, ask for the guardian, and give him this letter; he will be to you another Father Cristoforo. And you, my Renzo, must put yourself in safety from the anger of others, and your own. Carry this letter to Father Bonaventura da Lodi, in our convent of the Porta Orientale, at Milan. He will be a father to you, will give you directions, and find you work, till you can return and live more peaceably. Go to the shore of the lake, near the mouth of the Bione, a river not far from this monastery. Here you will see a boat waiting; say, 'Boat!' it will be asked you 'For whom?' And you must reply, 'San Francesco.' The boat will receive you, and carry you to the other side, where you will find a cart, that will take you to Monza."

There was still the care of the houses to think about. The Father received the keys, pledging himself to deliver them to whomsoever Renzo and Agnese should name.

"Before you go," said the Father, "let us pray all together that the Lord may be with you in this your journey, and forever; and, above all, that He may give you strength, and a spirit of love, to enable you to desire whatever He has willed." So saying, he knelt down in the middle of the church, and they all followed his example. After praying a few moments in silence, with a low but distinct voice he pronounced these words: "We beseech Thee, also, for the unhappy person who has brought us to this state. We should be unworthy of Thy mercy, if we did not, from our hearts, implore it for him; he needs it, O Lord! We, in our sorrow, have this consolation, that we are in the path where Thou hast placed us; we can offer Thee our griefs, and they may be-

come our gain. But he is Thine enemy! Alas, wretched man! he is striving with Thee! Have mercy on him, O Lord; touch his heart; reconcile him to Thyself, and give him all those good things we desire for ourselves."

Rising then in haste, he said: "Come, my children, you have no time to lose; God defend you; His angel go with you—farewell!"

The trio made their way slowly to the shore to which they had been directed; there they espied the boat, and exchanging the pass-word, stepped in. The waterman, planting one oar on the land, pushed off; then took up the other oar, and rowing with both hands, pulled out and made toward the opposite beach.

CHAPTER IX

THE SIGNORA

THE striking of the boat against the shore aroused Lucia, who, after secretly drying her tears, raised her head as if she were just awaking. Renzo jumped out first, and gave his hand successively to Agnese and Lucia; and then they all turned, and sorrowfully thanked the boatman. The cart stood waiting for them; the driver saluted the three expected travelers, and bade them get in; and then, with his voice and a stroke of the whip, he started the animal forward.

Our travelers reached Monza shortly after sunrise; the driver turned into an inn, and, as if at home in the place and well acquainted with the landlord, ordered a room for the newly-arrived guests, and accompanied them thither. After many acknowledgments, Renzo tried to induce him to receive some reward; but he put his hands behind him, and went to look after his horse.

After such a night as we have described, the weary frames of our travelers were soon overpowered with

sleep, and they availed themselves of a sofa that stood in an adjoining room to take a little repose. They then partook of a frugal meal, such as the poverty of the times would allow, and scant in proportion to the contingent wants of an uncertain future and their own slender appetite. Renzo would gladly have stayed there, at least for that day, to see the two women provided for, and to give them his services, but the Father had recommended them to send him on his way as quickly as possible.

The women would have found themselves much at a loss, had it not been for the good driver, who had orders to guide them to the convent, and to give them any direction and assistance they might need. With this escort, then, they took their way to the convent, which was a short distance outside the town of Monza. Arrived at the door, their conductor rang the bell, and asked for the guardian, who quickly made his appearance and received the letter.

"Oh! Brother Cristoforo!" said he, recognizing the handwriting, the tone of his voice and the expression of his face evidently indicating that he uttered the name of an intimate friend. It might easily be seen, too, that our good friar had in this letter warmly recommended the women, and related their case with much feeling, for the guardian kept making gestures of surprise and indignation, and raising his eyes from the paper, he would fix them upon the women with a certain expression of pity and interest. When he had finished reading it, he stood for a little while thoughtful, and then said to himself, "There is no one but the Signora—if the Signora would take upon herself this charge." He then drew Agnese a few steps aside in the little square before the convent; asked her a few questions, which she answered satisfactorily, and then, turning toward Lucia, addressed them both: "My good women, I will try; and I hope I shall be able to find you a retreat more than secure,

more than honorable, until it shall please God to provide for you in some better way. Will you come with me?"

The women reverently bowed assent, and the friar continued: "Come with me to the convent of the Signora. Keep, however, a few steps behind me, because people delight to speak evil, and no one knows what fine stories they would make out, if they were to see the Father-guardian walking with a beautiful young girl—with women, I mean to say."

So saying he moved forward. Lucia blushed, their guide smiled, and glanced at Agnese, who betrayed, also, a momentary smile, and when the friar had gone a few steps, they followed him at about ten yards' distance. The women then asked their guide, what they did not dare say to the Father-guardian, who the Signora was.

"The Signora," replied he, "is a nun; but she is not like the other nuns. Not that she is either the Abbess, or the Prioress; for, from what they say, she is one of the youngest there: but she is from Adam's rib, and she is of an ancient and high family in Spain, where some of them now are princes; and therefore they call her the Signora, to show that she is a great lady: and all the country call her by this name, for they say there never was her equal in this monastery before; and even now, down at Milan, her family ranks very high, and is held in great esteem; and in Monza still more so, because her father, though he does not live here, is the first man in the country; so that she can do what she pleases in the convent; and all the country-people bear her great respect; and if she undertakes a business she is sure to succeed in it; so that if this good monk before us is fortunate enough to get you into her hands, and she takes you under her protection, I dare venture to say you will be as safe as at the altar."

On reaching the gate of the town, the Father-guardian stopped and looked behind to see if they were following;

he then passed through and went on to the convent, and, when he reached it, stopped again at the doorway, and waited for the little party. He begged the guide to come again to the convent, to take back a reply; he promised to do so, and took his leave of the women, who loaded him with thanks and messages to Father Cristoforo. The guardian, bidding them go into the first court of the monastery, ushered them into the apartments of the portress, to whom he recommended them, and went forward alone to make his request. After a few moments, he returned, and with a joyful manner told them to come with him; his reappearance was just apropos, for they were beginning to find it difficult to ward off the pressing interrogations of the portress. While traversing the inner court, the Father instructed the women how they must behave to the Signora. "She is well-disposed toward you," said he, "and may be of much service to you. Be humble and respectful, reply with frankness to the questions she may please to put; and when you are not questioned, leave it to me." They then passed through a lower room to the parlor of the convent; and before entering, the guardian, pointing to the door, said to the women, in an undertone, "She is there;" as if to remind them of the lessons he had been giving. Lucia, who had never before seen a monastery, on entering the room, looked around for the Signora to whom she was to make obeisance, and perceiving no one, she stood perplexed; but seeing the Father advance, and Agnese following, she looked in that direction, and observed an almost square aperture, like a half-window, grated with two large thick iron bars, distant from each other about a span, and behind this a nun was standing. Her countenance, which showed her to be about twenty-five years old, gave the impression, at a first glance, of beauty, but of beauty worn, faded, and, one might almost say, spoiled. A black veil, stiffened and stretched quite flat

upon her head, fell on each side and stood out a little way from her face; under the veil, a very white linen band half covered a forehead of different but not inferior whiteness; a second band, in folds, down each side of the face, crossed under the chin, encircled the neck, and was spread a little over the breast to conceal the opening of a black dress. But this forehead was wrinkled every now and then, as if by some painful emotion, accompanied by the rapid movement of two jet-black eyebrows.

She was standing, as we have said, near the grated window, languidly leaning on it with one hand, twining her delicately-white fingers in the interstices, and, with her head slightly bent down, surveying the advancing party. "Reverend Mother and most illustrious Signora," said the guardian, bowing his head, and laying his right hand upon his breast, "this is the poor young girl to whom you have encouraged me to hope you will extend your valuable protection; and this is her mother."

Agnese and Lucia reverently curtseyed: the Signora beckoning to them with her hand that she was satisfied, said, turning to the Father: "It is fortunate for me that I have it in my power to serve our good friends the Capuchin Fathers in any matter. But," continued she, "will you tell me a little more particularly the case of this young girl, so that I may know better what I ought to do for her?"

Lucia blushed, and held down her head.

"You must know, Reverend Mother"— began Agnese; but the guardian silenced her with a glance, and replied, "This young girl, most illustrious lady, has been recommended to me, as I told you, by a brother friar. She has been compelled secretly to leave her country to avoid great dangers, and wants an asylum for some time where she may live retired, and where no one will dare molest her, even when"—

"What dangers?" interrupted the Signora. "Be good enough, Father, not to tell me the case so enigmatically. You know that we nuns like to hear stories minutely."

"They are dangers," replied the guardian, "which should hardly be mentioned ever so delicately in the pure ears of the Reverend Mother"—

"Oh, certainly!" replied the Signora, hastily, and slightly coloring.

"It is enough," resumed the guardian, "that a powerful nobleman—not all the great people of the world use the gifts of God to his glory and for the good of their neighbors, as your illustrious ladyship has done—a powerful cavalier, after persecuting this poor girl with base flatteries for some time, seeing that they were useless, had the heart openly to persecute her by force, so that the poor thing has been obliged to fly from her home."

"Come near, young girl," said the Signora to Lucia, beckoning to her with her hand. "I know that the Father-guardian is truth itself; but no one can be better informed in this business than yourself. It rests with you to say whether this cavalier was an odious persecutor."

As to approaching, Lucia instantly obeyed, but to answer was another matter. An inquiry on this subject, even when proposed by an equal, would have put her into confusion; but made by the Signora, and with a certain air of malicious doubt, it deprived her of courage to reply. "Signora....Mother....Reverend...." stammered she, but she seemed to have nothing more to say. Agnese, therefore, as being certainly the best informed after her, here thought herself authorized to come to her succor. "Most illustrious Signora," said she, "I can bear full testimony that my daughter hated this cavalier, as the devil hates holy water: I should say he is the devil himself; but you will excuse me if I speak improperly, for we are poor folk, as God made us. The case is this:

my poor girl was betrothed to a youth in her own station, a steady man, and one who fears God; and if the Signor Curato had been what he ought to be—I know I am speaking of a religious man, but Father Cristoforo, a friend here of the Father-guardian, is a religious man as well as he; and that's the man that's full of kindness; and if he were here he could attest"—

"You are very ready to speak without being spoken to," interrupted the Signora, with a haughty and angry look, which made her seem almost hideous. "Hold your tongue! I know well enough that parents are always ready with an answer in the name of their children!"

Agnese drew back, mortified.

"Reverend lady," said Lucia, "what my mother has told you is exactly the truth. The youth who paid his addresses to me I chose with my own good will. Forgive me, if I speak too boldly, but it is that you may not think ill of my mother. As to this Signor (God forgive him!) I would rather die than fall into his hands. And if you do us the kindness to put us in safety, since we are reduced to the necessity of asking a place of refuge, and of inconveniencing worthy people (but God's will be done!), be assured, lady, that no one will pray for you more earnestly and heartily than we poor women."

"I believe you," said the Signora, in a softened tone. "But I should like to talk to you alone. Not that I require further information, nor any other motives to attend to the wishes of the Father-guardian," added she, hastily, and turning toward him with studied politeness. "Indeed," continued she, "I have already thought about it; and this is the best plan I can think of for the present. The portress of the convent settled her last daughter in the world a few days ago. These women can occupy the room she has left at liberty, and supply her place in the trifling services she performed in the monastery. In truth"—and here she beckoned to the guardian

to approach the grated window, and continued in a low voice—"in truth, on account of the scarcity of the times, it was not intended to substitute anyone in the place of that young woman; but I will speak to the Lady Abbess; and at a word from me—at the request of the Father-guardian—in short, I give the place as a settled thing."

So saying, she called a lay sister (two of whom were, by a singular distinction, assigned to her private service), and desired her to inform the Abbess of the circumstance; then sending for the portress at the door of the cloister, she concerted with her and Agnese the necessary arrangements. Dismissing her, she bade farewell to the guardian, and detained Lucia. The guardian accompanied Agnese to the door, giving her new instructions by the way, and went to write his letter of report to his friend Cristoforo.

The Signora, who, in the presence of a Capuchin of advanced age, had studied her actions and words, now, when left *tête-à-tête* with an inexperienced country girl, no longer attempted to restrain herself; and her conversation became by degrees so strange, that, instead of relating it, we think it better briefly to narrate the previous history of this unhappy person; so much, that is, as will suffice to account for the unusual and mysterious conduct we have witnessed in her, and to explain the motives of her behavior in the facts which we shall be obliged to relate.

She was the youngest daughter of the Prince——a Milanese nobleman, who was esteemed one of the richest men of the city. But the unbounded idea he entertained of his title made his property appear barely sufficient to maintain a proper appearance; and all his attention was turned toward keeping it in one line, so far as it depended upon himself. How many children he had does not appear from history: it merely records that he had

designed all the younger branches of both sexes for the cloister, that he might leave his property entire to the eldest son, destined to perpetuate the family. Our unhappy Signora was yet unborn when her condition was irrevocably determined upon. It only remained to decide whether she should be a monk or a nun, a decision for which, not her assent, but her presence, was required. When she was born, the Prince, her father, wishing to give her a name that would always immediately suggest the idea of a cloister, and which had been borne by a saint of high family, called her Gertrude. Dolls dressed like nuns were the first playthings put into her hands. When the Prince, or the Princess, or the young prince, the only one of the sons brought up at home, would praise the charming appearance of the child, it seemed as if they could find no other way of expressing their ideas than by the words, "What a beautiful lady abbess!" No one, however, directly said to her, "You must become a nun." It was an intention understood and touched upon incidentally in every conversation relating to her future destiny.

At six years of age, Gertrude was placed for education, and still more as a preparatory step toward the vocation imposed upon her, in the monastery where we have seen her; and the selection of the place was not without design. Her father enjoyed here very great authority, and thought that here, better than elsewhere, his daughter would be treated with that distinction and deference which might induce her to choose this monastery as her perpetual abode. Nor was he deceived: the abbess and several intriguing nuns received with much gratitude the honor bestowed upon them, and fully entered into the intentions of the Prince concerning the permanent settlement of his daughter. Immediately on Gertrude's entering the monastery, she was called, by antonomasia, the Signorina. A separate place was as-

signed her at table, and a private sleeping apartment; her conduct was proposed as an example to others; indulgences and caresses were bestowed upon her without end, accompanied with that respectful familiarity so attractive to children, when observed in those whom they see treating other children with an habitual air of superiority. Perhaps things might have gone on thus to the end, if Gertrude had been the only little girl in the monastery; but, among her schoolfellows, there were some who knew they were designed for marriage.

Little Gertrude, filled with high ideas of her superiority, talked very magnificently of her future destiny as abbess and principal of the monastery; she wished to be an object of envy to the others on every account, and saw with astonishment and vexation that some of them paid no attention to all her boasting. To the majestic, but circumscribed and cold, images the headship of a monastery could furnish, they opposed the varied and bright pictures of a husband, guests, routs, towns, tournaments, retinues, dress and equipages. Such glittering visions roused in Gertrude's mind that excitement and ardor which a large basketful of freshly-gathered flowers would produce if placed before a bee-hive. Her parents and teachers had cultivated and increased her natural vanity, to reconcile her to the cloister; but when this passion was excited by ideas so much calculated to stimulate it, she quickly entered into them with a more lively and spontaneous ardor. That she might not be below her companions, and influenced at the same time by her new turn of mind, she replied that, at the time of decision, no one could compel her to take the veil without her consent; that she, too, could marry, live in a palace, enjoy the world, and that better than any of them; that she *could* if she wished it, that she *would* if she wished it; and that, in fact, she *did* wish it. The idea of the necessity of her consent, which hitherto had been, as it were, un-

noticed, and hidden in a corner of her mind, now unfolded and displayed itself in all its importance. On every occasion she called it to her aid, that she might enjoy in tranquillity the images of a self-chosen future.

But together with this idea there invariably appeared another; that the refusal of this consent involved rebellion against her father, who already believed it, or pretended to believe it, a decided thing; and at this remembrance, the child's mind was very far from feeling the confidence which her words proclaimed.

That which Gertrude had most distinctly figured in these dreams of the future, was external splendor and pomp; a something soothing and kindly, which, from the first, was lightly, and, as it were, mistily, diffused over her mind, now began to spread itself and predominate in her imagination. It took possession of the most secret recesses of her heart, as of a gorgeous retreat; hither she retired from present objects; here she entertained various personages strangely compounded of the confused remembrances of childhood, the little she had seen of the external world, and what she had gathered in conversation with her companions; she entertained herself with them, talked to them, and replied in their name; here she gave commands, and here she received homage of every kind. At times, the thoughts of religion would come to disturb these brilliant and toilsome revels. But religion, such as it had been taught to this poor girl, and such as she had received it, did not prohibit pride, but rather sanctified it, and proposed it as a means of obtaining earthly felicity. Robbed thus of its essence, it was no longer religion, but a phantom like the rest.

It was a rule that before a young person could be received as a nun, she should be examined by an ecclesiastic, called the vicar of the nuns, or by some one deputed by him, that it might be seen whether the lot were her deliberate choice or not; and this examination

could not take place for a year after she had, by a written request, signified her desire to the vicar. Those nuns who had taken upon themselves the sad office of inducing Gertrude to bind herself forever with the least possible consciousness of what she was doing, seized one of the moments we have described to persuade her to write and sign such a memorial. The memorial had scarcely reached its destination, before Gertrude repented having written it. Then she repented of these repentances; and thus days and months were spent in an incessant alternation of wishes and regrets.

Another rule was this: that a young girl was not to be admitted to this examination upon the course of life she had chosen, until she had resided for at least a month out of the convent where she had been educated. Nearly a year had passed since the presentation of this memorial; and it had been signified to Gertrude that she would shortly be taken from the monastery, and sent to her father's house, for this one month, there to take all the necessary steps toward the completion of the work she had really begun. The Prince, and the rest of the family, considered it an assured thing, as if it had already taken place. Not so, however, his daughter; instead of taking fresh steps, she was engaged in considering how she could withdraw the first. In her perplexity, she resolved to open her mind to one of her companions, the most sincere and always the readiest to give spirited advice. This young girl advised Gertrude to inform her father, by letter, that she had changed her mind, since she had not the courage to pronounce to his face, at the proper time, a bold "I will not." Gertrude waited with great anxiety for a reply; but none came; excepting that, a few days afterward, the Abbess, taking her aside, with an air of mystery, displeasure, and compassion, let fall some obscure hints about the great anger of her father, and a wrong step she must have been taking;

leaving her to understand, however, that if she behaved well, she might still hope that all would be forgotten. The poor young girl understood, and dared not venture to ask any further explanation.

At last, the day so much dreaded, and so ardently wished for, arrived Although Gertrude knew well enough that she was going to a great struggle, yet to leave the monastery, to pass the bounds of those walls in which she had been for eight years immured, to traverse the open country in a carriage, to see once more the city and her home, filled her with sensations of tumultuous joy. As to the struggle, with the direction of her confidantes, she had already taken her measures, and concerted her plans.—Either they will force me, thought she, and then I will be immovable—I will be humble and respectful, but will refuse; the chief point is not to pronounce another "Yes," and I will not pronounce it. Or they will catch me with good words; and I will be better than they; I will weep, I will implore, I will move them to pity; at last, will only entreat that I may not be sacrificed.—But, as it often happens in similar cases of foresight, neither one nor the other supposition was realized. Days passed, and neither her father nor any one else spoke to her about the petition, or the recantation; and no proposal was made to her, with either coaxing or threatening. Her parents were serious, sad, and morose toward her, without ever giving a reason for such behavior.

Such impressions painfully contrasted with the bright visions with which Gertrude had been so much occupied, and which she still secretly indulged in her heart. She had hoped that, in her splendid and much-frequented home, she should have enjoyed at least some real taste of the pleasures she had so long imagined; but she found herself woefully deceived. The confinement was as strict and close at home as in the convent; to walk out for

recreation was never even spoken of; and a gallery that led from the house to an adjoining church, obviated the sole necessity there might have been to go into the street. At every announcement of a visitor, Gertrude was obliged to go upstairs and remain with some old woman in the service of the family; and here she dined whenever there was company. The servants concurred in behavior and language with the example and intentions of their master; and Gertrude, who by inclination would have treated them with ladylike, unaffected familiarity; and who, in the rank in which she was placed, would have esteemed it a favor if they had shown her any little mark of kindness as an equal, and even have stooped to ask it, was now humbled and annoyed at being treated with a manifest indifference, although accompanied by a slight obsequiousness of formality. She could not, however, but observe, that one of these servants, a page, appeared to bear her a respect very different from the others, and to feel a peculiar kind of compassion for her. The behavior of this youth approached more nearly than anything she had yet seen to the state of things that Gertrude had pictured to her imagination, and more resembled the doings of her ideal characters. By degrees, a strange transformation was discernible in the manners of the young girl; there appeared a new tranquillity, and at the same time a restlessness, differing from her usual disquietude; her conduct was that of one who had found a treasure which oppresses him, which he incessantly watches, and hides from the view of others. Gertrude kept her eyes on this page more closely than ever; and she was surprised one unlucky morning by a chambermaid, while secretly folding up a letter. After a brief altercation, the maid got possession of the letter, and carried it to her master. The terror of Gertrude at the sound of his footsteps may be more easily imagined than described. When he stood before her with that frowning brow, and the ill-

omened letter in his hand, she would gladly have been a hundred feet underground, not to say in a cloister. His words were few, but terrible; the punishment named at the time was only to be confined in her own room under the charge of the maid who had made the discovery; but this was merely a foretaste, a temporary provision; he threatened, and left a vague promise of some other obscure, undefined, and more dreadful punishment.

The page was, of course, immediately dismissed, and was menaced with something terrible, if ever he should breathe a syllable about the past. In giving him this intimation, the Prince seconded it with two solemn blows, to associate in his mind with this adventure a remembrance that would effectually remove every temptation to make a boast of it.

At the end of four or five long days of confinement, Gertrude, disgusted and exasperated beyond measure, went and sat down in a corner of the room, and covering her face with her hands, remained for some time secretly indulging her rage. She then felt an overbearing longing to see some other faces, to hear some other words, to be treated differently. She thought of her father, of her family; and the idea made her shrink back in horror. But she remembered that it only depended upon her to make them her friends; and this remembrance awakened a momentary joy. Then followed a confused and unusual sorrow for her fault, and an equal desire to expiate it. She rose from her seat, went to the table, took up the fatal pen, and wrote a letter to her father, full of enthusiasm and humiliation, of affliction and hope, imploring his pardon, and showing herself indefinitely ready to do anything that would please him who alone could grant it.

CHAPTER X

THE SACRIFICE

ON the perusal of this letter the Prince——instantly saw a door opened to the fulfilment of his early and still cherished views. He therefore sent to Gertrude to come to him, and prepared to strike the iron while it was hot. Gertrude had no sooner made her appearance, than, without raising her eyes toward her father, she threw herself upon her knees, barely able to articulate the word "Pardon." The Prince beckoned to her to rise, and then, in a voice little calculated to reassure her, replied that it was not sufficient to desire and solicit forgiveness, for that was easy and natural enough to one who had been convicted of a fault, and dreaded its punishment; that, in short, it was necessary that she should deserve it. Gertrude, in a subdued and trembling voice, asked what she must do. To this question the Prince (for we can not find in our heart at this moment to give him the title of father) made no direct reply, but proceeded to speak at some length on Gertrude's fault, in words which grated upon the feelings of the poor girl like the drawing of a rough hand over a wound. His wretched auditor was completely overwhelmed; and then the Prince, gradually softening his voice and language, proceeded to say that for every fault there was a remedy and a hope of mercy; that hers was one the remedy for which was very distinctly indicated; that she ought to see in this sad event a warning, as it were, that a worldly life was too full of danger for her.

"Ah, yes!" exclaimed Gertrude, excited by fear, subdued by a sense of shame, and overcome at the instant by a momentary tenderness of spirit.

"Ah! you see it too," replied the Prince, instantly taking up her words. "Well, let us say no more of what is past: all is canceled. You have taken the only honorable and suitable course that remained for you; but, since you have chosen it willingly and cheerfully, it rests with me to make it pleasant to you in every possible way. I have the power of turning it to your advantage, and giving all the merit of the action to yourself, and I'll engage to do it for you." So saying, he rang a little bell that stood on the table, and said to the servant who answered it—"The Princess and the young Prince immediately." Then turning to Gertrude, he continued: "I wish them to share in my satisfaction at once; and I wish you immediately to be treated by all as is fit and proper. You have experienced a little of the severe parent, but henceforth you shall find me a loving father."

The persons summoned quickly made their appearance, and, on seeing Gertrude, regarded her with an expression of surprise and uncertainty. But the Prince, with a cheerful and loving countenance, which immediately met with an answering look from them, said: "Behold the wandering sheep: and I intend this to be the last word that shall awaken sad remembrances. Behold the consolation of the family! Gertrude no longer needs advisers, for she has voluntarily chosen what we desired for her good. She has given me to understand that she has determined"—Here Gertrude raised toward her father a look between terror and supplication, as if imploring him to pause, but he continued boldly—"that she has determined to take the veil."

"Brava! well done!" exclaimed the mother and son, turning at the same time to embrace Gertrude, who received these congratulations with tears, which were interpreted as tears of satisfaction. The Prince then expatiated upon what he would do to render the situation of his daughter pleasant, and even splendid. He spoke

of the distinction with which she would be regarded in the monastery and the surrounding country: that she would be like a princess, the representative of the family; that, as soon as ever her age would allow it, she would be raised to the first dignity, and in the meanwhile would be under subjection only in name.

"We had better fix the day for going to Monza to make our request of the Abbess," said the Prince. "How pleased she will be! I venture to say that all the monastery will know how to estimate the honor which Gertrude does them. Why not go this very day? Gertrude will be glad to take an airing."

"Let us go, then," said the Princess.

"I will go and give orders," said the young Prince.

"But"—suggested Gertrude submissively.

"Softly, softly," replied the Prince, "let her decide: perhaps she does not feel inclined to-day, and would rather delay till to-morrow. Tell me, would you prefer to-day or to-morrow?"

"To-morrow," answered Gertrude in a faint voice, thinking it something that she could get a little longer respite.

"To-morrow," pronounced the Prince solemnly; "she has decided that we go to-morrow. In the mean while I will go and ask the vicar of the nuns to name a day for the examination."

During the remainder of this day Gertrude had not a moment of quiet. She wished to calm her mind after so many scenes of excitement, but there was no opportunity.

The young bride—as the novices were usually distinguished, and as Gertrude was saluted on all sides on her first appearance—the young bride had enough to do to reply to all the compliments that were addressed to her. She was fully sensible that every one of these answers was, as it were, an assent and confirmation; yet how could she reply otherwise?

As evening approached the servants announced several visitors. The rumor had spread, and friends and relatives crowded to pay their respects.

"At last," said the Prince, "I have had the pleasure of seeing my daughter treated as becomes her rank. I must confess that she has conducted herself very well, and has shown that she will not be prevented making the first figure, and maintaining the dignity of the family."

Gertrude, annoyed, piqued, and at the same time a little puffed up by the compliments and ceremonies of the day, at this moment remembered all she had suffered from her jailer; and, seeing her father so ready to gratify her in everything but one, she resolved to make use of this disposition for the indulgence of at least one of the passions which tormented her. She displayed a great unwillingness again to be left alone with her maid, and complained bitterly of her treatment.

"What!" said the Prince; "did she not treat you with respect? To-morrow I will reward her as she deserves. Leave it to me, and I will get you entire satisfaction. In the meanwhile, a child with whom I am so well pleased must not be attended by a person she dislikes." So saying, he called another servant, and gave her orders to wait upon Gertrude, who, though certainly enjoying the satisfaction she received, was astonished at finding it so trifling, in comparison with the earnest wishes she had felt beforehand.

The woman appointed to attend her was an old servant of the family, who had formerly been the young Prince's governess, having received him from the arms of his nurse, and brought him up until he was almost a young man. This old woman talked while undressing Gertrude; she talked after she had lain down, and even continued talking after Gertrude was asleep. Youth and fatigue had been more powerful than cares. Her sleep was troubled disturbed, and full of tormenting dreams,

but was unbroken, until the shrill voice of the old woman aroused her to prepare for her journey to Monza.

"Up, up, Signora bride; it is broad daylight, and you will want at least an hour to dress and arrange yourself. The Signora Princess is getting up; they awoke her four hours earlier than usual. Quick, quick, Signorina, why do you look at me as if you were bewitched? You ought to be out of your nest at this hour."

Gertrude instantly obeyed, dressed herself in haste, and, after submitting to the decoration of her hair and person, went down to the salon, where her parents and brother were assembled. She was then led to an arm-chair, and a cup of chocolate was brought to her, which in those days was a ceremony similar to that formerly in use among the Romans, of presenting the *toga virilis*.

When the carriage was at the door, the Prince drew his daughter aside, and said: "Come, Gertrude, yesterday you had every attention paid you; to-day you must overcome yourself. The point is now to make a proper appearance in the monastery and the surrounding country, where you are destined to take the first place. They are expecting you, and all eyes will be upon you. You must maintain dignity and an easy manner. The Abbess will ask you what you wish, according to the usual form. You must reply that you request to be allowed to take the veil in the monastery where you have been so lovingly educated, and have received so many kindnesses, which is the simple truth. Show of what blood you are: be courteous and modest; but remember that there, away from the family, nobody will be above you."

Without waiting for a reply, the Prince led the way, Gertrude, the Princess, and the young Prince following; and, going downstairs, they seated themselves in the carriage. The snares and vexations of the world, and the happy, blessed life of the cloister, more especially for young people of noble birth, were the subjects of con-

versation during the drive. They drove slowly to the monastery, and when the carriage stopped before those well-known walls, and that dreaded door, Gertrude's heart beat violently. They alighted between two wings of bystanders. After traversing the first court, they entered the second, where the door of the interior cloister was held open, and completely blockaded by nuns. In the first row stood the Abbess, surrounded by the eldest of the sisterhood; behind them the younger nuns promiscuously arranged, and some on tiptoe; and, last of all, the lay-sisters mounted on stools. Many were the acclamations of this crowd, and many the hands held up in token of welcome and exultation. They reached the door, and Gertrude found herself standing before the Lady Abbess. After the first compliments, the Superior, with an air of cheerfulness and solemnity, asked her what she wanted in that place, where there was no one who would deny her anything.

"I am here"— began Gertrude; but, on the point of pronouncing the words which would almost irrevocably decide her fate, she hesitated a moment, and remained with her eyes fixed on the crowd before her. At this moment she caught the eye of one of her old companions, who looked at her with a mixed air of compassion and malice which seemed to say: "Ah! the boaster is caught." This sight, awakening more vividly in her mind her old feelings, restored to her also a little of her former courage; and she was on the point of framing a reply far different from the one which had been dictated to her, when, raising her eyes to her father's face, almost, as it were, to try her strength, she encountered there such a deep disquietude, such a threatening impatience, that, urged by fear, she continued with great precipitation, as if flying from some terrible object: "I am here to request permission to take the religious habit in this monastery, where I have been so lovingly educated." The

Abbess quickly answered, that she was very sorry in this instance that the regulations forbade her giving an immediate reply, which must come from the general votes of the sisters, and for which she must obtain permission from her superiors; that, nevertheless, Gertrude knew well enough the feelings entertained toward her in that place to foresee what the answer would be; and that, in the mean while, no regulations prevented the Abbess and the sisterhood from manifesting the great satisfaction they felt in hearing her make such a request. There then burst forth a confused murmur of congratulations and acclamations. Presently, large dishes were brought filled with sweetmeats, and were offered first to the bride, and afterward to her parents.

During the drive home Gertrude felt little inclination to speak. Alarmed at the step she had taken, ashamed at her want of spirit, and vexed with others as well as herself, she tried to enumerate the opportunities which still remained of saying No, and languidly and confusedly resolved in her own mind that in this, or that, or the other instance she *would* be more open and courageous. Yet in the midst of these thoughts, her dread of her father's frown still held its full sway; so that once, when, by a stealthy glance at his face, she was fully assured that not a vestige of anger remained, when she even saw that he was perfectly satisfied with her, she felt quite cheered, and experienced a real but transient joy.

We shall not follow Gertrude in her continual round of sights and amusements. In the meanwhile, the vicar of the nuns had despatched the necessary attestation, and permission arrived to hold the conference for the election of Gertrude. The meeting was called; two thirds of the secret votes, which were required by the regulations, were given, as was to be expected, and Gertrude was accepted. She herself, wearied with this long struggle, begged for immediate admission into the monastery, and

no one came forward to oppose such a request. She was therefore gratified in her wish; and, after being pompously conducted to the monastery, she assumed the habit. After twelve months of novitiate, full of alternate regret and repentings, the time of public profession arrived; that is to say, the time when she must either utter a "no," more strange, more unexpected, and more disgraceful than ever; or pronounce a "yes," already so often repeated: she pronounced it, and became a nun for ever.

The sight of those nuns who had coöperated in bringing her thither was hateful to her: she remembered the arts and contrivances they had made use of, and repaid them with incivilities, caprices, and even with open reproaches. These they were obliged to bear in silence; for though the Prince was willing enough to tyrannize over his daughter when he found it necessary to force her into the cloister, yet, having once obtained his purpose, he would not so willingly allow others to assume authority over one of his family.

Shortly after finally taking the veil, Gertrude had been appointed teacher of the young people who attended the convent for education, and it may easily be imagined what would be their situation under such discipline. Her early companions had all left, but the passions called into exercise by them still remained; and, in one way or other, the pupils were compelled to feel their full weight. When she remembered that many of them were destined to that course of life of which she had lost every hope, she indulged against the poor children a feeling of rancor, which almost amounted to a desire for vengeance. On other occasions, the same hatred for the rules and discipline of the cloister was displayed in fits of temper entirely different: then, she not only supported the noisy diversions of her pupils, but excited them. If one of them happened to allude to the Lady

Abbess's love of gossiping, their teacher would imitate it at length, and act it like a scene in a comedy; and on these occasions would laugh immoderately; but her laughter came not from her heart. Thus she passed several years of her life, with neither leisure nor opportunity to make any change, until, to her misfortune, an occasion unhappily presented itself.

Among other privileges and distinctions accorded to her as a compensation for not being abbess, was the special grant of a bedchamber in a separate part of the monastery. This side of the building adjoined a house inhabited by a young man of professedly abandoned character; one of the many who, in those days, by the help of their retinues of bravoes, and by combinations with other villains, were enabled, up to a certain point, to set at defiance public force and the authority of the laws. Our manuscript merely gives him the name of Egidio. This man, having, from a little window which overlooked the courtyard, seen Gertrude occasionally idly loitering there, and allured, rather than intimidated, by the dangers and impiety of the act, ventured one day to address her. The miserable girl replied. At first she experienced a lively, but not unmixed satisfaction. Into the painful void of her soul was infused a powerful and continual stimulus; a fresh principle, as it were, of vitality; but this enjoyment was like the restorative draught which the ingenious cruelty of the ancients presented to a condemned criminal, to strengthen him to bear the agonies of martyrdom. A great change, at the same time, was observable in her whole deportment; she became more regular and tranquil, less bitter and sarcastic, and even showed herself friendly and affable; so that the sisters congratulated each other on the happy change; so far were they from imagining the real cause, and from understanding that this new virtue was nothing else than hpyocrisy added to her former failings. This improve-

ment lasted but a short time. She soon returned to her accustomed scorn and caprice, and renewed her imprecations and raillery against her cloistral prison, expressed sometimes in language hitherto unheard in that place, and from those lips. Nevertheless, a season of repentance succeeded each outbreak, and an endeavor to atone for it and wipe out its remembrance by additional courtesies and kindness. The sisters were obliged to bear all these vicissitudes as they best could, and attributed them to the wayward and fickle disposition of the Signora.

For some time no one seemed to think any longer about these matters; but one day the Signora, having had a dispute with a lay-sister for some trifling irregularity, continued to insult her so long beyond her usual bounds, that the sister, having for some time gnawed the bit in silence, could no longer keep her patience, and threw out a hint that she knew something, and would reveal it when an opportunity occurred. From that moment the Signora had no peace. It was not long after that, one morning, the sister was in vain expected at her usual employment; she was sought in her cell, but fruitlessly; she was called loudly by many voices, but there was no reply; she was hunted and sought for diligently, here and there, above, below, from the cellar to the roof; but she was nowhere to be found. And who knows what conjectures might have been made, if, in searching for her, it had not happened that a large hole was discovered in the garden wall, which induced every one to think that she had made her escape thence. Messengers were immediately despatched in various directions to overtake her and bring her back; every inquiry was made in the surrounding country; but there was never the slightest information about her. Perhaps they might have known more of her fate, had they, instead of seeking at a distance, dug up the ground near at hand. After many ex-

pressions of surprise, because they never thought her a likely woman for such a deed, after many arguments, they concluded that she must have fled to some very great distance; and because a sister happened once to say, "She must certainly have taken refuge in Holland," it was ever after said and maintained in the monastery that she had fled to Holland. The Signora, however, did not seem to be of this opinion. Not that she manifested any disbelief, or opposed the prevailing idea with her particular reasons. But the less she spoke of it, the more did it occupy her thoughts.

It was about a year after this event that Lucia was presented to the Signora, and had the interview with her which we have described. The Signora multiplied her inquiries about Don Rodrigo's persecution, and entered into particulars with a boldness which must have appeared worse than novel to Lucia, who never had imagined that the curiosity of nuns could be exercised on such subjects. The opinions also which were mingled with these inquiries, or which she allowed to appear, were not less strange. She seemed almost to ridicule Lucia's great horror for the nobleman, and asked whether he were deformed, that he excited so much fear; and would have esteemed her retiring disposition almost irrational and absurd, if she had not beforehand given the preference to Renzo. And on this choice, too, she multiplied questions which astonished the poor girl, and put her to the blush. No sooner did Lucia find herself alone with her mother, than she opened her whole mind to her; but Agnese, being more experienced, in a very few words quieted her doubts, and solved the mystery. "Don't be surprised," said she; "when you know the world as well as I, you'll not think it anything very wonderful. Great people—some more, some less, some one way, and some another—have all a little oddity. They are all so. However, Heaven be praised that she seems

to have taken such a fancy to you, and will really protect us. As to the rest, if you live, my child, and it falls to your lot to have anything more to do with gentlemen, you'll understand it."

CHAPTER XI

RENZO SEES STRANGE SIGHTS

AS a pack of hounds, after in vain tracking a hare, return desponding to their master, with heads hung down, and drooping tails, so, on this disastrous night, did the bravoes return to the palace of Don Rodrigo. He was listlessly pacing to and fro, in an unoccupied room upstairs that overlooked the terrace. He was full of impatience, and not entirely free from disquietude—not only for the doubtfulness of success, but also for the possible consequences of the enterprise: this being the boldest and most hazardous in which our valiant cavalier had ever engaged. He endeavored, however, to reassure himself with the thought of the precautions he had taken that not a trace of the perpetrator should be left. "As to suspicions, I care nothing for them. I should like to know who would be inclined to come hither, to ascertain if there be a young girl here or not. Let him dare to come—the rash fool—and he shall be well received! Let the friar come, if he pleases. The old woman? She shall be off to Bergamo. Justice? Poh! Justice! The Podestà is neither a child nor a fool. And at Milan? Who will care for these people at Milan? Who will listen to them? Who knows even what they are? They are like lost people in the world—they haven't even a master: they belong to no one. Come, come, never fear. How Attilio will be silenced to-morrow! He shall see whether I am a man to talk and boast." But the idea on which he dwelt

most, because he found it both a soother of his doubts and a nourisher of his predominating passion, was the thought of the flatteries and promises he would employ to gain over Lucia. "She will be so terrified at finding herself here alone, in the midst of these faces, that she will look to me, will throw herself upon her knees to pray; and if she prays"—

While indulging in these fine anticipations, he hears a footstep, goes to the window, opens it a little, and peeps through: "It is they. And the litter!——Where is the litter? Three, five, eight; they are all there; there's Griso too; the litter's not there—Griso shall give me an account of this."

When they reached the house, Griso deposited his staff, cap, and pilgrim's habit in a corner of the ground-floor apartment, and, as if carrying a burden which no one at the moment envied him, ascended to render his account to Don Rodrigo. He was waiting at the head of the stairs; and as Griso approached with the foolish and awkward air of a deluded villain, "Well," said, or rather vociferated, he, "Signor Boaster, Signor Captain, Signor *Leave-it-to-me?*"

"It is hard," replied Griso, resting one foot on the top step, "to be greeted with reproaches after laboring faithfully, and endeavoring to do one's duty, at the risk of one's life."

"How has it gone? Let us hear," said Don Rodrigo; and Griso briefly related how he had arranged, what he had done, seen and not seen, heard, feared, and retrieved.

"You are not to blame, and have done your best," said Don Rodrigo. "You have done what you could; but—if under this roof there be a spy, and if I succeed in discovering him, I'll settle matters with him; I'll pay him as he deserves."

"The same suspicion, Signor," replied he, "has crossed

my mind; and if it be true, and we discover a villain of this sort, my master should put it into my hands. One who has diverted himself by making me pass such a night as this;—it is *my* business to pay him for it. However, all things considered, it seems likely there may have been some other cross-purposes, which now we can not fathom. To-morrow, Signor, to-morrow we shall be in clear water."

"Do you think you have been recognized?"

Griso replied that he hoped not; and the conclusion of the interview was, that Don Rodrigo ordered him to do three things next day, which he would have thought of well enough by himself. One was to despatch two men in good time in the morning to the constable, with the intimation which we have already noticed; two others to the old house, to ramble about, and keep at a proper distance any loiterer who might happen to come there, and to conceal the litter from every eye till nightfall, when they would send to fetch it, since it would not do to excite suspicion by any further measures at present; and lastly, to go himself on a tour of discovery, and despatch several others, of the most dexterity and good sense, on the same errand, that he might learn something of the causes and issue of the confusion of the night. Having given these orders, Don Rodrigo retired to bed.

Next morning, Griso was again surrounded with business on all hands, when Don Rodrigo rose. This nobleman quickly sought Count Attilio, who, the moment he saw him approach, called out to him, with a look and gesture of raillery, "Saint Martin!"

"I have nothing to say," replied Don Rodrigo, as he drew near; "I will pay the wager; but it is not this that vexes me most. I told you nothing about it, because, I confess, I thought to surprise you this morning. But I will tell you all."

"That friar has a hand in this business," said his cousin, after listening to the account with suspense and wonder, and with more seriousness than could have been expected from a man of his temperament. "I always thought that friar, with his dissembling and out-of-the-way answers, was a knave and a hypocrite. And you never opened yourself to me—you never told me plainly what happened to irritate you the other day." Don Rodrigo related the conversation. "And did you submit to that?" exclaimed Count Attilio. "Did you let him go away as he came?"

"Would you have me draw upon myself all the Capuchins of Italy?"

"I don't know," said Attilio, "whether I should have remembered, at that moment, that there was another Capuchin in the world except this daring knave; but surely, even under the rules of prudence, there must be some way of getting satisfaction even on a Capuchin! We must manage to redouble civilities cleverly to the whole body, and then we can give a blow to one member with impunity. However, the fellow has escaped the punishment he best deserved; but I'll take him under my protection, and have the gratification of teaching him how to talk to gentlemen."

"What do you intend to do?"

"I don't know yet; but rest assured I'll pay off the friar. I'll think about it, and my uncle, the Signor Count of the Privy Council, will be the man to help me. Dear Uncle Count! How fine it is, when I can make a politician of his stamp do all my work for me! The day after to-morrow I shall be at Milan, and, in one way or other, the friar shall be rewarded."

"Fine talk," said Don Rodrigo, "these rascals will make in the neighborhood. But what do I care? As to justice, I laugh at it: there is no proof against me, and even if there were, I should care for it just as little: the

constable was warned this morning to take good heed, at the risk of his life, that he makes no deposition of what has happened. Nothing will follow from it; but gossiping, when carried to any length, is very annoying to me. It's quite enough that I have been bullied so unmercifully."

"You did quite right," replied the Count Attilio. "Your Podestà is an obstinate, empty-pated, prosing fellow, but he is nevertheless a gentleman, a man who knows his duty; and it is just when we have to do with such people, that we must take care not to bring them into difficulties. If that rascal of a constable should make a deposition, the Podestà, however well-intentioned, would be obliged"—

"But you," interrupted Don Rodrigo, with some warmth, "you spoil all my affairs by contradicting him in everything, by silencing him and laughing at him on every occasion. Why can not a Podestà be an obstinate fool, when at the same time he is a gentleman?"

"Do you know, cousin," said Count Attilio, glancing toward him with a look of raillery and surprise—"do you know that I begin to think you are half afraid? In earnest, you may rest assured that the Podestà"—

"Well, well, didn't you yourself say that we must be careful?"

"I did; and when it is a serious matter, I'll let you see that I'm not a child. Do you know all that I have courage to do for you? I am ready to go in person to this Signor Podestà. Aha! how proud he will be of the honor! And I am ready, moreover, to let him talk for half an hour about the Count Duke, and the Spanish Signor, the governor of the castle, and to give an ear to everything. Then I will throw in a few words about my uncle, the Signor Count of the Privy Council, and you will see what effect these words in the ear of the Signor Podestà will produce."

After these, and a few similar words, Count Attilio set off on his expedition, and Don Rodrigo remained awaiting with anxiety Griso's return. Toward dinner-time he made his appearance, and reported the success of his reconnoitering tour.

The tumult of the preceding night had been so clamorous, the disappearance of three persons from a village was so strange an occurrence, that the inquiries, both from interest and curiosity, would naturally be many and persevering; and, on the other hand, those who knew something were too numerous to agree in maintaining silence on the matter. Perpetua could not set foot out of doors without being assailed by one or another to know what it was that had so alarmed her master. Don Abbondio, indeed, might positively forbid her to speak, and earnestly entreat her to be silent; and she could easily enough reply that there was no need to urge upon her what was so clear and evident; but certain it is that the secret in the poor woman's breast was like very new wine in an old and badly-hooped cask, which ferments, and bubbles, and boils, and if it does not send the bung into the air, works itself about till it issues in froth, and penetrates between the staves, and oozes out in drops here and there, so that one can taste it, and almost decide what kind of wine it is. Gervase, who could hardly believe that for once he was better informed than his neighbors, and who fancied himself a man like the others from having lent a hand in an enterprise that bore the appearance of criminality, was dying to make a boast of it. And though Tonio gave him instructions with his finger upon his lips, yet it was not possible to silence every word. Even Tonio himself—after being absent from home that night at an unusual hour, and returning with an unusual step and air—even he could not dissimulate the matter with his wife; and she was not dumb. The person who talked least was Menico; for no sooner had

he related to his parents the history and object of his expedition, than it appeared to them so terrible a thing that their son had been employed in frustrating an undertaking of Don Rodrigo's, that they hardly suffered the boy to finish his narration. They then gave him most strenuous and threatening orders to take good heed that he did not give the least hint of anything.

With all these scraps of information, there were grounds for a story of more certainty and clearness than common, and such as might have contented the most criticising mind. But the invasion of the bravoes—an event too serious and notorious to be left out, and one on which nobody had any positive information—was what rendered the story dark and perplexing. The name of Don Rodrigo was whispered about; and so far all were agreed; but beyond, everything was obscurity and dissension. Much was said about the two bravoes who had been seen in the street toward evening, and of the other who had stood at the inn door; but what light could be drawn from this naked fact? They inquired of the landlord, "Who had been there the night before?" but the landlord could not even remember that he had seen anybody that evening; and concluded his answer, as usual, with the remark that his inn was like a sea-port. Above all, the pilgrim seen by Stefano and Carlandrea puzzled their heads and disarranged their conjectures. He was a good spirit come to the aid of the women; he was the wicked spirit of a roguish pilgrim-impostor, who always came by night to join such companions, and perform such deeds, as he had been accustomed to when alive; he was a living and true pilgrim, whom they attempted to murder, because he was preparing to rouse the village; he was one of these very villains, disguised as a pilgrim; he was this; he was that; he was so many things, that all the sagacity and experience of Griso would not have sufficed to discover

who he was, if he had been obliged to glean this part of the story from others. But, as the reader knows, that which rendered it so perplexing to others was exactly the clearest point to him; and it enabled him to lay before Don Rodrigo a report sufficiently clear.

Closeted with his master, he told him of the stratagem attempted by the poor lovers, which naturally accounted for his finding the house empty, and the ringing of the bell, without which they would have been obliged to suspect traitors (as these two worthy men expressed it) in the house. He told him of the flight; and for this, too, it was easy to find more than one reason—the fear of the lovers on being taken in a fault, or some rumor of the bravoes' invasion, when it was discovered, and the village roused. Lastly, he told him that they had gone to Pescarenico, but further than this his knowledge did not extend. Don Rodrigo was pleased to be assured that no one had betrayed him, and to find that no traces remained of his enterprise; but it was a light and passing pleasure. "Fled together!" cried he; "together! And that rascally friar!" The word burst forth hoarsely from his throat, and half-smothered between his teeth, as he bit his nails with vexation: his countenance was as brutal as his passion. "That friar shall answer for it. Griso, I am not myself. I must know, I must find out—This night I must know where they are. I have no peace. To Pescarenico directly, to know, to see, to find. Four crowns on the spot, and my protection forever. This night I must know. And that villain! That friar"—

Once more Griso was in the field, and in the evening of that same day he could impart to his worthy patron the desired information, and by this means.

Our author has been unable to ascertain through how many mouths the secret had passed which Griso was ordered to discover, but certain it is that the good man who had escorted the women to Monza, returning

in his cart to Pescarenico, toward evening, happened, before reaching home, to light upon one of these trustworthy friends, to whom he related, in confidence, the good work he had just completed, and its sequel; and it is equally certain that, two hours afterward, Griso was able to return to the palace and inform Don Rodrigo that Lucia and her mother had found refuge in a convent at Monza, and that Renzo had pursued his way to Milan.

Don Rodrigo felt a malicious satisfaction on hearing of this separation, and a revival of hope that he might at length accomplish his wicked designs. He spent a great part of the night in meditating on his plans, and arose early in the morning with two projects in his mind, the one determined upon, the other only roughly sketched out. The first was immediately to despatch Griso to Monza to learn more particular tidings of Lucia, and to know what he might attempt. He therefore instantly summoned his faithful servant, placed in his hand four crowns, again commended him for the ability by which he had earned them, and gave him the order he had been premeditating.

Griso took two companions, and set off with a cheerful and hardy look, but cursing, in the bottom of his heart, Monza, and interdicts, and women, and the fancies of patrons.

Don Rodrigo's other project was the devising of some plan to prevent Renzo from rejoining Lucia, or setting foot in that part of the country. He therefore resolved to spread abroad rumors of threats and snares, which, coming to his hearing, through some friend, might deprive him of any wish to return to that neighborhood. He thought, however, that the surest way of doing this would be to procure his banishment by the State; and to succeed in his project, he felt that law would be more likely to answer his purpose than force. He could, for

example, give a little coloring to the attempt made at the parsonage, paint it as an aggressive and seditious act, and, by means of the doctor, signify to the Podestà that this was an opportunity of issuing an apprehension against Renzo. But our deliberator quickly perceived that it would not do for him to meddle in this infamous negotiation; and, without pondering over it any longer, he resolved to open his mind to Doctor Azzecca-garbugli.—There are so many edicts! thought Don Rodrigo: and the Doctor is not a goose: he will be sure to find something to suit my purpose—some quarrel to pick with this rascally fellow of a weaver.—But while Don Rodrigo was thus fixing upon the doctor, as the man most able to serve him, another person, one that nobody would imagine, even Renzo himself, was laboring, so to say, with all his heart to serve him, in a far more certain and expeditious way than any the doctor could possibly have devised.

After the mournful separation from Lucia, we have related, Renzo proceeded from Monza toward Milan, in a state of mind our readers can easily imagine. To leave his own dwelling; and, what was worse, his native village; and, what was worse still, Lucia; to find himself on the high road, without knowing where he was about to lay his head, and all on account of that villain! When this image presented itself to Renzo's mind, he would be quite swallowed up with rage and the desire for vengeance; but then he would recollect the prayer which he had joined in offering up with the good friar in the church at Pescarenico, and repent of his anger; so that during this journey he had killed Don Rodrigo, and raised him to life again, at least twenty times.

He walked forward a long time; and, when he found that he was near the city, accosted a passenger, and making a low bow, said to him: "Will you be kind enough, Signor?"—

"What do you want, my brave youth?"

"Can you direct me the shortest way to the Capuchin Convent where Father Bonaventura lives?"

The person to whom Renzo addressed himself was a wealthy resident of the neighborhood, who was returning in great haste to reach his home before dark, and therefore quite willing to escape this detention. Nevertheless, without betraying any impatience, he courteously replied: "My good friend, there are many more convents than one; you must tell me more clearly which you are seeking." Renzo then drew from his bosom Father Cristoforo's letter, and showed it to the gentleman, who having read the address: "Porta Orientale," said he, returning it to him; "you are fortunate, young man; the convent you want is not far from hence. Take this narrow street to the left; it is a by-way; not far off you will come to the corner of a long and low building: this is the Lazzaretto; follow the moat that surrounds it, and you will come out at the Porta Orientale. Enter the gate, and three or four hundred yards further you will see a little square surrounded by fine elms; there is the convent, and you can not mistake it. God be with you, my brave youth!" And, accompanying the last words with a courteous wave of the hand, he continued his way. Renzo stood surprised and edified at the affable manners of the citizens toward strangers, and knew not that it was an unusual day—a day in which the Spanish cloak had to stoop before the doublet. He followed the path that had been pointed out, and arrived at the Porta Orientale. Renzo entered the gate, and pursued his way. The street was deserted; so much so, that had he not heard a distant buzz indicating some great movement, he would have fancied he was entering a forsaken town. Advancing slowly, without knowing what to make of this, he saw on the pavement certain white streaks, as white as snow; but snow it could not

be, since it does not fall in streaks, nor usually at this season. He advanced to one of these, looked at it, touched it, and felt assured that it was flour.—A great abundance, thought he, there must be in Milan, if they scatter in this manner the gifts of God. They gave us to understand that there was a great famine everywhere. See how they go about to make us poor people quiet.—

Going a few more steps, and coming to the column, he saw at its foot a still stranger sight: scattered about on the steps of the pedestal were objects which certainly were not stones, and, had they been on a baker's counter, he would not have hesitated a moment to call them loaves. But Renzo would not so readily trust his eyes; because, forsooth! this was not a likely place for bread.—Let us see what these things can be—said he again to himself; and, going to the column, he stooped down, and took one in his hand: it was really a round, very white loaf, and such as Renzo was unaccustomed to eat, except on holy days.—"It is really bread!" said he, aloud, so great was his astonishment. "Is this the way they scatter it in this country? in such a year too? and don't they even give themselves the trouble to pick up what falls? This must be the land of Cockayne!"

After ten miles' walk in the fresh morning air, this bread, when he had recovered his self-possession, aroused his appetite.—Shall I take it? he deliberated: Poh! they have left it here to the discretion of dogs, and surely a Christian may taste it. And, after all, if the owner comes forward, I will pay him.—Thus reasoning, he put the loaf he held in his hand into one pocket, took up a second and put it into the other, and a third, which he began to eat, and then proceeded on his way, more uncertain than ever, and longing to have this strange mystery cleared up. Hardly had he started, when he saw people issuing from the interior of the city, and he stood still

to watch those who first appeared. They were a man, a woman, and, a little way behind, a boy: all three carrying a load on their backs which seemed beyond their strength, and all three in a most extraordinary condition. Their dress, or rather their rags, were covered with flour, their faces floured, and, at the same time, distorted and much heated; they walked not only as if wearied by their load, but trembling, as if their limbs had been beaten and bruised. The man staggered under the weight of a large sack of flour, which, here and there in holes, scattered a shower around at every stumble, at every disturbance of his equilibrium. But the figure of the woman was still more awkward: an unwieldy bulk, two extended arms which seemed to bear it up with difficulty, and looked like two carved handles from the neck to the widest part of a large kilderkin, and beneath this enormous body were two legs, naked up to the knees, which could hardly totter along. Renzo gazed steadily at this great bulk, and discovered that it was the woman's gown turned up around her, with as much flour in it as it could hold, and rather more, so that from time to time it was scattered in handfuls over the ground. The boy held with both hands a basket full of bread upon his head; but, from having shorter legs than his parents, he kept falling behind by degrees, and in running forward to overtake them, the basket lost its balance, and a few loaves fell.

In the mean time people arrived from without; and one of them, accosting the woman, "Where must we go to get bread?" asked he. "Forward, forward," was her reply; and when they were a few yards past, she added, muttering, "These blackguard peasants will come and sweep all the bakehouses and magazines, and there will be nothing left for us."

"There's a little for everybody, magpie," said the husband; "plenty, plenty."

From this and similar scenes which Renzo heard and witnessed, he began to gather that he had come to a city in a state of insurrection, and that this was a day of victory; that is to say, when everyone helped himself in proportion to his inclination and power, giving blows in payment. However we may desire to make our poor mountaineer appear to the best advantage, yet historical accuracy obliges us to say that his first feeling was that of satisfaction. He had so little to rejoice at in the ordinary course of things, that he was inclined to approve of anything that might make a change, whatever it might be. And besides, not being a man superior to his age, he entertained the common opinion, or prejudice, that the scarcity of bread was produced by monopolists and bakers; and readily did he esteem every method justifiable of rescuing from their grasp the food which they, according to this opinion, so cruelly denied to the hunger of a whole people. He resolved, however, to get out of the tumult, and rejoiced at being directed to a Capuchin, who would give him shelter and good advice. Engaged in such thoughts, and looking about him at the fresh victors who appeared, laden with spoil, he took the short road that still remained to reach the convent.

On the present site of a noble palace, with its beautiful portico, there was formerly, and till within a very few years, a small square, and at the furthest side of this, the church and convent of the Capuchins, with four large elms standing before them. Renzo went straight to the door, put into his bosom the remaining half loaf, took out his letter and held it ready in his hand, and rang the bell. A small wicket was opened at the summons, and the face of the porter appeared.

"I am from the country, bringing an important letter to Father Bonaventura from Father Cristoforo."

"Give it to me," said the porter, putting his hand through the grate.

"No, no," said Renzo, "I must give it into his own hands."

"He is not in the convent."

"Let me come in, then, and I will wait for him," replied Renzo.

"Follow my advice," rejoined the friar; "go and wait in the church, where you may be employing yourself profitably. You cannot be admitted into the convent at present." So saying, he closed the wicket.

Renzo stood irresolute, with the letter in his hand. He then took a few steps toward the door of the church, to follow the advice of the porter, but thought he would first just give another glance at the stir outside.

CHAPTER XII

THE BREAD RIOT

THIS was the second year of the scarcity. In the preceding year, the surplus remaining from former seasons had more or less supplied the deficiency; and the people, neither satiated nor famished, but certainly insufficiently provided for, had reached the harvest of 1628, in which our story finds us. Now, this harvest, so long and eagerly looked forward to, proved still less productive than the former, partly on account of the adverse character of the season (and that not only at Milan, but, in great measure, in the surrounding country) and partly by the agency of man.

Such were the ravages and havoc of war—that amiable war to which we have already alluded—that in the parts of the country bordering on its scene, much more land than usual remained uncultivated and deserted by the peasants, who, instead of working to provide food for themselves and others, were obliged to wander about as beggars. I have said, more than usual, because the

insupportable taxes, levied with unequaled cupidity and folly—the habitual conduct, even in perfect peace, of the stationary troops—conduct which the mournful documents of the age compare to that of an invading enemy —and other reasons, which this is not the place to enumerate, had for some time been producing this sad effect throughout the whole of the Milanese. No sooner had this deficient harvest been gathered in, than the provisions for the army, and the waste which always accompanies them, made such a fearful void in it that scarcity quickly made itself felt, and with scarcity its melancholy, but profitable, as well as inevitable, effect, a rise in prices.

But when the price of food reaches a certain point, there always arises (at least, hitherto it has always arisen; and if it is so still, after all that has been written by so many learned men, what must it have been in those days!)—there always arises an opinion among the many that it is not the effect of scarcity. They forget that they had foreseen and predicted such an issue; they suddenly fancy that there is plenty of corn, and that the evil proceeds from there not being as much distributed as is required for consumption; propositions sufficiently preposterous, but which flatter both their anger and their hopes. Grain monopolists, either real or imaginary, large landholders, the bakers who purchased corn, all, in short, who had either little or much, or were thought to have any, were charged with being the causes of the scarcity and dearness of provisions; they were the objects of universal complaint, and of the hatred of the multitude of every rank. The populace could tell with certainty where there were magazines and granaries full and overflowing with corn, and even requiring to be propped up; they indicated most extravagant numbers of sacks; they talked with certainty of the immense quantities of grain secretly despatched to other places, where, probably, it was asserted with equal assurance and equal excitement,

that the grain grown there was transported to Milan. They implored from the magistrates those precautions which always appear, or, at least, have always hitherto appeared so equitable, so simple, so capable of drawing forth the corn which they affirm to be secreted, walled up, or buried, and of restoring to them abundance. The magistrates, therefore, busied themselves in fixing the highest price that was to be charged upon every commodity; in threatening punishment to any one who should refuse to sell. As, however, all human precautions, how vigorous soever, can neither diminish the necessity of food, nor produce crops out of season; and as these individual precautions offered no very inviting terms to other countries where there might be a superabundance, the evil continued and increased. The multitude attributed such an effect to the scarcity and feebleness of the remedies, and loudly solicited some more spirited and decisive measures. Unfortunately, they found a man after their own heart.

In the absence of the Governor, Don Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova, who was encamped over Casale del Monferrato, the High Chancellor Antonio Ferrer, also a Spaniard, supplied his place at Milan. This man saw that a moderate price on bread is in itself a most desirable thing; and he thought (here was his mistake) that an order from him would suffice to produce it. He fixed the limit (*lo meta*, by which name the tariff was distinguished in articles of food) at the price that bread would have had, if the corn had been generally sold at thirty-three livres the bushel, and they sold it as high as eighty.

Regulations less irrational and less unjust had, on more than one occasion, by the resistance of actual circumstances, remained unexecuted; but that this should be carried into effect was undertaken by the multitude, who, seeing their demands at last converted into a law, would not suffer it to be a mere form. They immediately ran

to the bake-houses, to demand bread at the fixed price; and they required it with that air of threatening resolution which passion, force, and law united could impart. It need not be asked if the bakers resisted. With sleeves turned up, they were busied in carrying, putting into the oven, and taking out thence, without intermission; for the people, having a confused idea that it was too violent an attempt to last long, besieged the bake-houses incessantly, to enjoy their temporary good fortune; and every reader can imagine what a pleasure it must have been to drudge like a slave, and expose one's self more than usually to an attack of pleurisy, to be, after all, a loser in consequence. But, with magistrates on one side threatening punishments, and the people on the other importunate, murmuring at every delay that was interposed in serving them, and indefinitely menacing some one or other of their chastisements, which are always the worst that are inflicted in this world—there was no help for it; drudge they must; they were forced to empty and replenish their ovens, and sell. However, to keep them up to such employment, it was of little avail to impose strict orders, and keep them in constant fear: it was a question of absolute practicability; and had the thing lasted a little longer, they *could* have done no more.

Don Gonzalo, buried over head in the affairs of war, did what the reader will certainly imagine: he nominated a Council, which he endowed with full authority to fix such a price upon bread as could become current, thus doing justice to both parties. The deputies assembled, or, as it was expressed, after the Spanish fashion, in the jargon of those days, the *junta* met; and, after a hundred bowings, compliments, preambles, sighs, whisperings, airy propositions, and subterfuges, urged, by a necessity which all felt, to come to some determination, they at length agreed to augment the price of bread. The bakers once more breathed, but the people raved.

The evening preceding the day in which Renzo arrived at Milan, the streets and squares swarmed with men transported with indignation, and swayed by a prevailing opinion. Every conversation increased the general belief, and roused the passions of both hearer and speaker. Thousands went to rest that night with an indeterminate feeling that something must and would be done. Crowds assembled before daybreak: children, women, men, old people, workmen, beggars, all grouped together at random.

They only wanted something to lay hold of, some beginning, some kind of impetus to reduce words to deeds, and this was not long wanting. Toward daybreak, little boys issued from the bakers' shops, carrying baskets of bread to the houses of their usual customers. The first appearance of one of these unlucky boys in a crowd of people was like the fall of a lighted squib in a gunpowder magazine. "Let us see if there's bread here!" exclaimed a hundred voices, in an instant. "Ay, for the tyrants who roll in abundance, and would let us starve of hunger," said one, approaching the boy; and, raising his hand to the edge of the basket, he snatched at it, and exclaimed, "Let me see!" The boy colored, turned pale, trembled, and tried to say, "Let me go on;" but the words died between his lips, and slackening his arms, he endeavored to disengage them hastily from the straps.

"Down with the basket!" was the instantaneous cry. Many hands seized it, and brought it to the ground; they then threw the cloth that covered it into the air. A tepid fragrance was diffused around. "We, too, are Christians: we must have bread to eat," said the first. He took out a loaf, and, raising it in the view of the crowd, began to eat: in an instant all hands were in the basket, and in less time than one can relate it, all had disappeared. Nor were the victors half satisfied with such insignificant spoil; and some there were mingled in

the crowds who had resolved upon a much better regulated attack. "To to the bake-house, to the bake-house!" was the cry.

In the street called La Corsia de' Servi was a bake-house, which is still there, bearing the same name—a name that, in Tuscan, means "The Bakery of the Crutches." In this direction the crowd advanced. The people of the shop were busy questioning the poor boy who had returned unladen, and he, pale with terror, and greatly discomposed, was unintelligibly relating his unfortunate adventure, when suddenly they heard a noise as of a crowd in motion: it increases and approaches; the forerunners of the crowd are in sight.

"Shut, lock up; quick, quick!" one runs to beg assistance from the sheriff; the others hastily shut up the shop, and bolt and bar the doors inside. The multitudes begin to increase without, and the cries redouble of—"Bread! bread! Open! open!"

At this juncture the sheriff arrived, in the midst of a troop of halberdiers. "But, my friends," said the sheriff, addressing the people from the door of the shop, "what are you doing here? Go home, go home. Where is your fear of God? What will our master the King say? We don't wish to do you any harm, but go home, like good fellows. There is nothing good to be got here, either for the soul or body. Go home, go home!"

"Back! back!" cried the halberdiers, throwing themselves in a body upon their nearest neighbors, and pushing them back with the point of their weapons. The people replied with a grumbling shout, and retreated as they could. A small space was cleared before the house; the sheriff knocked and kicked against the door, calling to those within to open it: these, seeing from the window how things stood, ran down in haste and admitted the sheriff, followed by the halberdiers, who crept in one after another, the last repelling the crowd with their

weapons. When all were secured, they rebolted the door, and running upstairs, the sheriff displayed himself at the window.

"My friends!" cried he: many looked up. "My friends! go home. A pardon to all who go home at once!"

"Bread! bread! Open! open!" were the most unmistakable words in the savage vociferations the crowd sent forth in reply.

"Justice, my friends! take care; you have yet time given you. Come, get away; return to your houses. You shall have bread; but this is not the way to get it. Away with those irons; down with those hands! Fie! you Milanese, who are talked of all over the world for peaceableness! Listen! you have always been good sub—Ah, you rascals!"

This rapid transition of style was caused by a stone, which, coming from the hands of one of these good subjects, struck the forehead of the sheriff, on the left temple. "Rascals! rascals!" he cried, shutting the window in a rage, and retiring from view.

Then the masters and shopboys appeared at the upper windows, armed with stones and crying out to those below, with horrible looks and gestures, to let them alone, they showed their weapons, and threatened to let fly among them. Seeing that nothing else would avail, they began to throw at them in reality.

"Ah! you vagabonds! you villains! Is this the bread you give to poor people?" came from below. More than one was injured, and two boys were killed. Fury increased the strength of the people; the doors and bars gave way; and the crowd poured into the passages in torrents. Those within, perceiving their danger, took refuge in the garrets: the sheriff, the halberdiers, and a few of the household gathered together here in a corner, under the slates; and others, escaping by the skylights, wandered about on the roof like cats.

Such was the state of things, when Renzo, finishing, as we have related, his piece of bread, came to the suburb of the Porta Orientale, and set off, without being aware of it, toward the central scene of the tumult. He continued his way, now urged forward, now hindered, by the crowd; and as he walked, he watched and listened, to gather from the confused murmur of voices some more positive information of the state of things.

"Make way, gentlemen; pray be good enough to make way for a poor father of a family, who is carrying something to eat to five famished children." These were the words of one who came staggering under the weight of a large sack of flour; and everybody instantly drew back to attend to his request.

"I," said another to his companion, "shall take my departure. I am a man of the world, and I know how these things go. These clowns who now make so much noise, to-morrow or next day will be shut up in their houses, cowering with fear. I have already noticed some faces, some worthy fellows, who are going about as spies, and taking note of those who are here and not here; and when all is over they will render in an account, and bring punishment on those who deserve it."

"He who protects the bakers," cried a sonorous voice, which attracted Renzo's attention, "is the superintendent of provisions."

"They are all rascals," said a bystander.

"Yes; but he is at the head of them," replied the first.

The superintendent of provisions, elected every year by the governor from a list of six nobles formed by the council of decurioni, was the president of this council, as well as of the court of provisions, which, composed of twelve noblemen, had, together with other duties, that of overlooking the distribution of corn in the city. The person who occupied this post must, necessarily, in times of scarcity and ignorance, have been regarded as the au-

thor of the evil, unless he had acted like Ferrer—a course which was not in his power, even had the idea entered his mind.

Renzo at last arrived opposite the bake-house. The crowds here had considerably dispersed, so that he could contemplate the dismal scene of recent confusion—the walls unplastered and defaced with stones and bricks, the windows broken, and the door destroyed.

"These are no very fine doings," thought Renzo to himself: "if they treat all the bake-houses in this way, where will they make bread? In the ditches?"

From time to time somebody would issue from the house, carrying part of a bin, of a tub, or of a bolting hutch, the pole of a kneading instrument, a bench, a basket, a journal, a wastebook, or something belonging to this unfortunate bake-house; and shouting, "Make room, make room!" would pass on through the crowd. All these, Renzo saw, went in the same direction, and to some fixed place. Determined to find out the true meaning of this procedure, he followed behind a man who, having tied together a bundle of broken planks and chips, carried it off on his back, and, like the others, took the road that runs along the northern side of the cathedral, and receives its name from the flight of steps which was then in existence, and has only lately been removed. The crowds became more dense as he went forward, but they made way for the carrier; and while he cleft the waves of people, Renzo, following in his wake, arrived with him in the very center of the throng. Here was a space, and in the midst a bonfire, a heap of embers, the relics of the implements before mentioned. Around, the people were dancing and clapping their hands, mingling in the uproar a thousand shouts of triumph and imprecation.

The man with the bundle upset it into the embers; others gathered them up and raked them together from the sides and underneath; the smoke increased and thick-

ened, the flame again burst forth, and with it, the redoubled cries of the by-standers.

The flame had again sunk; no one was seen approaching with fresh combustibles, and the crowd was beginning to feel impatient, when a rumor was spread that at the Cordusio (a small square or cross-way not far distant) they had laid siege to a bake-house. In similar circumstances, the announcement of an event very often produces it. Together with this rumor, a general wish to repair thither gained ground among the multitude: "I am going; are you going? Let us go, let us go!" were heard in every direction; the crowd broke up, were set in motion, and moved on. Renzo remained behind, almost stationary, except when dragged forward by the torrent; and in the mean while held counsel with himself, whether he should make his escape from the stir, and return to the convent in search of Father Bonaventura, or go and see this affray too.

By the outlet at one corner of the square, the multitude had already entered the short and narrow street Pescheria Vecchia, and thence, through the crooked archway, into the Piazza de' Mercanti.

From the Piazza de' Mercanti the clamorous multitude turned into the by-street de' Fustagnai, whence they poured into the Cordusio. Everyone, immediately on entering the square, turned his eyes toward the bake-house that had been indicated to them. But, instead of the crowd of friends whom they expected to find already at work, they saw only a few, irresolutely hovering about at some distance from the shop, which was fastened up, and protected by armed men at the windows, who gave tokens of a determination to defend themselves in case of need. They, therefore, turned back and paused, to inform those who were coming up, and see what course the others would wish to take; some returned, or remained behind. There was a general retreat and deten-

tion, asking and answering of questions, a kind of stagnation, signs of irresolution, then a general murmur of consultation. At this moment an ill-omened voice was heard in the midst of the crowd: "The house of the superintendent of provisions is close by; let us go and get justice, and lay siege to it." It seemed rather the common recollection of an agreement already concluded, than the acceptance of a proposal. "To the superintendent's! to the superintendent's!" was the only cry that could be heard. The crowd moved forward with unanimous fury toward the street where the house was situated.

CHAPTER XIII

FERRER TO THE RESCUE

THE unfortunate superintendent was at this moment digesting a poor and scanty dinner, unwillingly eaten with a little stale bread, and awaiting, with much suspense, the termination of this storm, far from suspecting that it was about to fall with such violence upon his own head. Some benevolent person preceded the crowd in urgent haste, and entered the house to warn him of his pressing danger. The servants, already attracted to the door by the noise, were looking with much alarm up the street, in the direction of the approaching tumult. While listening to the warning, the vanguard came in sight; the servants ran in haste and terror to inform their master, and while he was deliberating whether he should fly, and how he should accomplish it, some one else arrived to tell him there was no longer time for flight. There was barely time for the servants to secure the door.

"The superintendent! The tyrant! The fellow who would starve us! We'll have him, alive or dead!"

The poor man wandered from room to room, pale with terror, commending himself to God, and imploring his servants to stand firm, and find him some way of making his escape. But how, and where? He ascended to the garret, and there, through an aperture between the ceiling and the tiles, looked anxiously into the street, and saw it swarming with the enraged populace.

Renzo found himself this time in the thickest of the confusion, not now carried there by the throng, but by his own deliberate will. At the first proposal of blood-shedding, he felt his own curdle within him; as to the plundering, he had not exactly determined whether, in this instance, it were right or wrong; but the idea of murder aroused in him immediate and unfeigned horror. And although, by that fatal submission of excited minds to the excited affirmations of the many, he felt as fully persuaded that the superintendent was an aggressive villain, as if he had known all that the unhappy man had done, yet he had advanced among the foremost, with a determined intention of doing his best to save him. With this resolution, he had arrived close to the door which was assailed in a hundred ways.

The first magistrates who had notice of the insurrection immediately sent off to the commander of the castle, which then bore the name of Porta Giovia, for the assistance of some troops; and he quickly despatched a band of men. But what with the information, and the orders, and the assembling, and getting on their way, and their march, the troops did not arrive till the house was completely surrounded by an immense army of besiegers.

Among these appeared one, who was himself a spectacle, an old and half-starved man, who, rolling about two sunken and fiery eyes, composing his wrinkled face to a smile of diabolical complacency, and with his hands raised above his infamous hoary head, was brandishing

in the air a hammer, a rope, and four large nails, with which said he he meant to nail the vicar alive to the posts of his own door.

"Fie upon you! for shame!" burst forth from Renzo, horrified at such words, and at the sight of so many faces betokening approbation of them; at the same time encouraged by seeing others, who, although silent, betrayed in their countenances the same horror that he felt. "For shame! Would you take the executioner's business out of his hand? Murder a Christian! How can you expect that God will give us food, if we do such wicked things? He will send us thunderbolts instead of bread!"

"Ah, dog! traitor to his country!" cried one of those who could hear, in the uproar, these sacred words, turning to Renzo with a diabolical countenance. "Wait, wait! He is servant of the superintendent's, dressed like a peasant; he is a spy; give it him! give it him!" a hundred voices echod the cry. "What is it? where is he? who is he?—A servant of the superintendent!—A spy!—The superintendent disguised as a peasant, and making his escape!—Where is he? where is he? give it him! give it him!"

Renzo became dumb, shrank into a mere nothing, and endeavored to make his escape; some of his neighbors helped him to conceal himself, and, by louder and different cries, attempted to drown these adverse and homicidal shouts.

Suddenly a movement extended itself throughout the crowd, and a cry was echoed from mouth to mouth, in chorus: "Ferrer! Ferrer!" Surprise, expressions of favor or contempt, joy and anger, burst forth wherever the name was heard; some echoed it, some tried to drown it; some affirmed, some denied, some blessed, some cursed.

"Is Ferrer here?—It isn't true, it isn't true!—Yes, yes! long live Ferrer; he who gives bread at a low price!—No, no!—He's here, he's here, in his carriage.—What is

this fellow going to do? Why does he meddle in it? We don't want anybody!—Ferrer! long live Ferrer! the friend of poor people! he's come to take the superintendent to prison.—No, no: we will get justice ourselves: back, back!—Yes, yes! Ferrer! let Ferrer come! off with the superintendent to prison!"

And everybody, standing on tiptoe, turned toward the part where the unexpected new arrival was announced.

In fact, at the extremity of the crowd, on the opposite side to where the soldiers were stationed, Antonio Ferrer, the high chancellor, was approaching in his carriage; feeling conscious, probably, that by his mistakes and obstinacy, he was the cause, or, at any rate the occasion, of this outbreak, he now came to try to allay it, and to avert, at least, the most terrible and irreparable effects: he came, in short, to employ worthily a popularity unworthily acquired.

In the struggle of the two parties who were contending for the suffrages of the populace crowded around the house of the superintendent, the appearance of Antonio Ferrer instantly gave a great advantage to the more moderate side, which had evidently been kept in awe, and, had the succor been a little longer delayed, would have had neither power nor scope for combat. This person was acceptable to the multitude on account of the tariff of his own appointment, which had been so favorable to purchasers, and also for his heroic resistance to every argument on the contrary side. Minds already thus biased were now more than ever captivated by the bold confidence of the old man, who, without guards or retinue, ventured thus to seek and confront an angry and ungoverned multitude. The announcement also that he came to take the superintendent prisoner produced a wonderful effect: so that the fury entertained toward the unfortunate man, which would have been rendered more violent, whoever had come to oppose it without making

any concessions, was now, with this promise of satisfaction, and, to use a Milanese expression, with this bone in their mouth, a little allayed, and made way for other and far different sentiments which pervaded the minds of the greater part of the crowd.

"Is this the Ferrer who helps to make out proclamations?" demanded our friend, Renzo of a new neighbor, remembering the "Vidit Ferrer" that the doctor had pointed out to him at the bottom of one of these edicts, and which he had resounded so perseveringly in his ears.

"Yes; the high chancellor," was the reply.

"He is a worthy man, isn't he?"

"More than that! it is he who had fixed bread at a low price; and they wouldn't have it so; and now he is come to take the superintendent prisoner, who has not dealt justice to us."

It is unnecessary to say that Renzo was instantly for Ferrer. He wished to get a sight of him directly, but this was no easy matter; yet, with the help of sundry breastings and elbowings, like a true Alpine, he succeeded in forcing a passage and reaching the foremost ranks next to the side of the carriage.

The vehicle had proceeded a little way into the crowd, and was at this moment at a standstill, by one of those inevitable impediments so frequent in a journey of this sort. The aged Ferrer presented himself now at one window of the carriage, now at another, with a countenance full of humility, affability, and benevolence—a countenance which he had always reserved, perchance he should ever have an interview with Don Filippo IV; but he was compelled to display it also on this occasion. He talked too; but the noise and murmur of so many voices, and the *Long lives* which were addressed to him, allowed only a few of his words to be heard. He therefore had recourse to gestures, now laying his fingers on his lips to receive a kiss, which, quickly extending his

hands, he distributed right and left, as an acknowledgment of thanks for these public demonstrations of kindness; now spreading them and waving them slowly outside the windows to beg a little room; now politely lowering them to request a moment's silence. When he had partly succeeded in obtaining it, the nearest to the carriage heard and repeated his words: "Bread, abundance: I come to give you justice: a little room, if you please."

The driver himself also smiled with gracious condescension on the multitudes, as if he were some great personage; and, with ineffable politeness, waved his whip slowly to the right and left, to beg his incommodious neighbors to restrain themselves and retire a little on either side. "Be good enough, gentlemen," said he, at last, "to make a little room, a very little; just enough to let us pass."

The most active and benevolent now exerted themselves to make the passage so courteously requested; some before the horses made the people retire by civil words, by putting their hands on their breasts, and by sundry gentle pushes. "There, there, a little room, gentlemen."

After standing a few moments admiring the behavior of the old man, who, though agitated by perplexity and overcome with fatigue, was yet animated with solicitude, and adorned, so to say, with the hope of rescuing a fellow-creature from mortal anguish, Renzo put aside every thought of going away, and resolved to lend a hand to Ferrer, and not to leave him until he had obtained his purpose.

The carriage, once more on its way, continued to advance, slowly, and not without some further trifling delays. The distance to be traversed was not perhaps above a stone's throw; but with respect to the time it occupied, it might have appeared a little journey even to one who was not in such urgent haste as Ferrer. The

crowds moved onward, before, behind, and on each side of the carriage, like the mighty billows round a vessel advancing through the midst of a storm. The noise was more shrill, more discordant, more stunning, than the whistling and howling of a storm itself. Ferrer, endeavoring to give a satisfactory answer to the cries of the people, now loudly ejaculating the words that he knew would be most acceptable, or that some instant necessity seemed to require, he, too, continued to talk the whole way. "Yes, gentlemen; bread, abundance—I will conduct him to prison: he shall be punished—*si está culpable.* Yes, yes: I will command: bread at a low price. *A si es*....So it is, I mean to say: the King our master would not wish such faithful subjects to suffer from hunger. *Ox! ox! guardaos:* take care we don't hurt you, gentlemen. Pedro, *adelante, con juicio.* Plenty, plenty. A little room, for pity's sake. Bread, bread! To prison, to prison!" With such speeches and replies, among incessant acclamations, and some few grumbles of opposition, which were distinguishable here and there, but were quickly silenced, Ferrer at last reached the house, principally by the aid of these good auxiliaries.

The rest, who, as we have before related, were already here with the same good intentions, had in the mean while labored to make and maintain a clear space, so that, when the carriage stopped before the door, there was left between it and the house a small empty place. Renzo, who, by acting a little both as a scout and guide, had arrived with the carriage, managed to place himself in one of the two front rows of worthy people, who served at once both as wings to the carriage and as a rampart to the too eager crowd of gazing bystanders.

Ferrer drew a long deep breath on perceiving this open space, and the door still shut. Some ran to let down the steps of the carriage: the old man rose, put out his head,

and laying his right hand on the arm of this worthy assistant, came out and stood on the top step.

The crowd on each side stretched themselves up to see him: a thousand faces, a thousand beards pressed forward; and the general curiosity and attention produced a moment of profound silence. Ferrer, standing for that moment on the step, cast a glance around, saluted the people with a bow, as if from a rostrum, and laying his left hand on his heart, cried, "Bread and justice!" then bold, upright, and in his robes, he descended amid acclamations which rent the skies.

Those within had, in the mean while, opened the door, or, to speak more correctly, had finished the work of wresting out the chain, together with the already more than half-loosened staples. They made an opening, to admit so ardently desired a guest, taking, however, great care to limit the aperture to a space that his person would occupy. "Quick, quick," said he; "open it wide, and let me in: and you, like brave fellows, keep back the people; don't let them follow me, for Heaven's sake! Make ready a passage, for by-and-by....Eh! eh! gentlemen, one moment," said he to those within: "softly with this door, let me pass: oh! my ribs: take care of my ribs. Shut it now: no! eh! my gown, my gown!" It would have remained caught in the door, if Ferrer had not dextrously withdrawn the train, which disappeared from the outside like the tail of a snake that slips into a hiding-place when pursued.

The door pushed to, and closed as it best could be, was then propped up with bars within. Outside, those who constituted themselves Ferrer's body-guard labored with shoulders, arms, and cries, to keep the space clear, praying from the bottom of their hearts that he would be expeditious.

"Be quick, be quick!" said he, also, as he stood within the portico, to the servants who had gathered round him,

and who, almost out of breath, were exclaiming: "Blessings on you! ah, your Excellency! oh, your Excellency!"

"Quick, quick," repeated Ferrer; "where is this poor man?"

The superintendent came downstairs, half dragged and half carried by his servants, as white as a sheet. When he saw his kind helper, he once more breathed freely; his pulse again beat, a little life returned into his limbs and a little color into his cheeks: he hastened toward Ferrer, saying: "I am in the hands of God and your Excellency. But how shall we get out of this house? It is surrounded by the mob, who desire my death."

"*Venga con migo usted*, and be of good courage: my carriage is outside; quick, quick!" And taking his hand, he led him toward the door, doing his best to encourage him.

The door opened; Ferrer led the way, followed by his companion, who, creeping along, clung to the toga of his deliverer, like a little child to its mother's gown. Those who had kept the space clear, now raised their hands and hats so as to form a kind of net or cloud to screen the superintendent from the perilous gaze of the populace, and allow him to enter the carriage, where he concealed himself, by crouching in a corner. Ferrer then got in, and the door was shut. The people knew or guessed what had happened, and sent forth a confused shout of applause and imprecation.

As soon as Ferrer had seated himself, he bent down, and advised the vicar to keep himself well concealed in the corner, and not show himself for Heaven's sake; but there was no necessity for this warning. He, on the contrary, was obliged to display himself at the window, to attract and engage the attention of the multitude: and through the whole course of this drive he was occupied, as before, in making, to his changeable audience, the most lengthened and most unconnected harangue that

ever was uttered; only interrupting it occasionally with some Spanish word or two, which he turned to whisper hastily in the ear of his squatting companion.

Pedro regained his ancient spirit in passing between these two files of puppets and these muskets so respectfully elevated. Having recovered from his consternation, he remembered who he was, and whom he was driving; and shouting "Ohey! ohey!" without the addition of other complimentary speeches to the mob, now sufficiently reduced in number to allow of his venturing on such treatment, he whipped up his horses, and took the road toward the castle.

"*Levantese, levantese; estamos afuera,*" said Ferrer to the superintendent, who, reassured by the cessation of the cries, by the rapid motion of the carriage, and by these words, uncovered and stretched himself, rose, and recovering himself a little, began to overwhelm his liberator with thanks. Ferrer after condoling with him on his perilous situation, and congratulating him on his safety, exclaimed, running the palm of his hand over his bald pate, "Ah, what will be said by his Excellency, who is already beside himself, for this cursed Casale, that won't surrender? What will be said by the Duke of Conde, who starts with fear if a leaf makes more noise than usual? What will be said by our lord the King, who will be sure to hear something of so great a tumult? And when will it be over? *Dios lo sabe!*"

"Ah! as to myself, I will meddle no more in the business," said the superintendent; "I wash my hands of it; I resign my office into your Excellency's hands, and will go and live in a cave, or on a mountain, like a hermit, far, far away from this inhuman rabble."

"You will do what is best for the service of his Majesty," gravely replied the chancellor.

"His Majesty does not desire my death," answered the superintendent. "In a cave, far from these people."

CHAPTER XIV

RENZO MAKES A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

THE crowd that was left behind began to disperse, and to branch off to the right and left along the different streets. One went home to attend to his business; another departed that he might breathe the fresh air in a little liberty, after so many hours of crowded confinement; while a third set off in search of acquaintances, with whom he might have a little chat about the doings of the day.

Meanwhile, the sun had set, and twilight spread its uniform somberness over all objects. Many, wearied with the exertions of the day, and tired of gossiping in the dark, returned to their respective homes. Renzo, after assisting the progress of the carriage so long as there was need of assistance, and following it even between the two files of soldiers, as in triumph, was satisfied when he saw it rolling along, uninterruptedly, out of danger; and accompanying the crowd a little way, he soon deserted it by the first outlet, that he might breathe a little fresh air in quiet. After taking a few steps at large, in the midst of much agitation from so many new scenes, so many passions, and so many recent and confused remembrances, he began to feel his need both of food and rest; and kept looking up from side to side, in hopes of seeing a sign of some inn, since it was too late to go to the convent. As he thus proceeded, gazing upward, he suddenly saw a group of gossips; and stopping to listen, he heard them, as they talked, making conjectures, proposals, and designs for the morrow. After listening a moment or two, he could not resist putting in his word, thinking that he who had *done* so much might, without presumption, join a little in the conversa-

tion. Persuaded, from what he had seen during the day, that to accomplish anything it was only necessary to suggest it to the populace, "My good sirs," cried he, by way of exordium, "may I, too, give my poor opinion? My poor opinion is this: that there are other iniquities besides this of bread. Now we've seen plain enough to-day that we can get justice by making ourselves felt. Then let us proceed until all these grievances are cured, that the world may move forward in a little more Christian fashion. Isn't it true, gentlemen, that there's a set of tyrants who set at naught the Ten Commandments, and search out poor people to do them every mischief they can; and yet they're always in the right? Nay, when they've been acting the rascal more than usual, they hold their heads higher than at other times? Yes, and even Milan has its share of them."

"Too many," said a voice.

"So I say," rejoined Renzo: "the accounts of them have already reached our ears. And besides, the thing speaks for itself. Let us suppose, for instance, that one of those I am talking about should have one foot outside and one in Milan: if he's a devil there, he won't be an angel here, I fancy. Yet just tell me, sirs, whether you've ever seen one of these men behind the grating! And the worst of it is (and this I can affirm with certainty), there are proclamations in plenty published to punish them; and these are not proclamations without meaning, but well drawn out; you can't find anything better done: there are all sorts of villainies clearly mentioned, exactly as they happen, and to each one its proper punishment. It is plain enough, then, that the King, and those who command under him, are desirous that knaves should be duly punished; but nothing is done, because there is some league between them. We, therefore, ought to break it; we should go to-morrow morning to Ferrer, who is a worthy man, and a tractable Signor; we saw to-day how glad he

was to be among the poor people, and how he tried to hear what was said to him, and answered with such condescension. We should go to Ferrer, and tell him how things stand, and I, for my part, can tell him some fine doings; for I saw with my own eyes a proclamation with ever so many arms at the top, which had been made by three of the rulers, for there was the name of each of them printed plain below, and one of these names was Ferrer, seen by me with my own eyes. And if the powerful ones won't lower their heads, and will still play the fool, we are ready to make them, as we've done to-day."

Renzo had talked so earnestly, that from the beginning a great part of the assemblage had stopped all other conversation, and had turned to listen to him; and, up to a certain point, all had continued his auditors. A confused clamor of applause, of "Bravo; certainly, he is right; it is too true!" followed his harangue. Critics, however, were not wanting. "Oh, yes," said one, "listen to a mountaineer: they are all advocates;" and he went away. "Now," muttered another, "every ragamuffin must put in his word; and what with having too many irons in the fire, we shan't have bread sold cheap, which is what we've made this stir for." Renzo, however, heard nothing but compliments, one taking him by this hand, another by that. "I will see you to-morrow.—Where?—At the square of the Cathedral.—Very well.—Very well.—And something will be done."

"Which of these good gentlemen will direct me to an inn, where I can get something to eat, and a lodging for the night, that will suit a poor youth's pocket?" said Renzo.

"I am at your service, my brave fellow," said one who had listened attentively to his harangue, and had not yet said a word. "I know an inn that will just suit you; and I will introduce you to the landlord, who is my friend, and a very worthy man."

"Near at hand?" asked Renzo.

"Only a little way off," replied he.

The assembly dispersed; and Renzo, after several warm shakes of the hand from strangers, went off with his new acquaintance, thanking him heartily for his kindness.

"Not a word, not a word," said he; "one hand washes the other, and both the face. Is it not one's duty to serve one's neighbor?" And as he walked, he kept making of Renzo, in the course of conversation, first one and then another inquiry. "Not out of curiosity about your doings; but you seem tired: where do you come from?"

"I come," replied Renzo, "as far as from Lecco."

"From Lecco! Are you a native of Lecco?"

"Of Lecco—that is, of the territory."

"Poor fellow! from what I have gathered in your conversation, you seem to have been badly treated."

"Eh! my dear fellow, I was obliged to speak rather carefully, that I might not publish my affairs to the world; but some day it will be known, and then—. But I see a sign of an inn here; and, to say the truth, I am not inclined to go any farther."

"No, no; come where I told you: it's a very little way farther," said the guide; "here you won't be comfortable."

"Very well," replied the youth; "I'm not a gentleman, accustomed to down, though: something good to supply the garrison, and a straw mattress, are enough for me: and what I most want is to find both directly. Here we are, fortunately." And he entered a shabby-looking doorway, over which hung the sign of the Full Moon.

"Well; I will lead you here, since you wish it," said the incognito; and he followed him.

"Don't trouble yourself any further," replied Renzo. "However," added he, "you will do me the favor of taking a glass with me."

"I accept your kind offer," replied he; and he advanced, as being better acquainted with the place, before Renzo, through a little court, approached a glass door, lifted up the latch, and, opening it, entered with his companion into the kitchen.

Two lights illuminated the apartment, suspended from two hooks fixed in the beam of the ceiling. Many persons, all of whom were engaged, were lounging on benches which stretched along both sides of a narrow, dirty table, occupying almost the whole of one side of the room: here and there a cloth was spread, and a few dishes set out; at intervals, cards were played, and dice cast, and gathered up; and everywhere were bottles and glasses. The clamor was great. A boy was going to and fro in haste and bustle, waiting upon this table and sundry chessboards: the host was sitting upon a small bench under the chimney-piece, occupied, apparently, in making and unmaking certain figures in the ashes with the tongs; but, in reality, intent on all that was going on around him. He rose at the sound of the latch, and advanced toward the new comers. When he saw the guide—Cursed fellow! thought he, you are always coming to plague me, when I least want you! Then, hastily glancing at Renzo, he again said to himself—I don't know you; but, coming with such a hunter, you must be either a dog or a hare: when you have said two words, I shall know which.—

"What are your commands, gentlemen?" said he.

"First of all, a good flask of wine," said Renzo, "and then something to eat." So saying, he sat down on a bench toward the end of the table. But immediately the recollection of the bench and table at which he had last sat with Lucia and Agnese rushed to his mind, and forced from him a sigh. He shook his head to drive away the thought, and then saw the host coming with the wine. His companion had sat down opposite to

Renzo, who poured him out a glass, and pushed it toward him, saying, "To moisten your lips." And filling the other glass, he emptied it at one draught.

"What can you give me to eat?" then demanded he of the landlord.

"A good bit of stewed meat?" asked he.

"Yes, sir; a bit of stewed meat."

"You shall be served directly," said the host to Renzo; and turning to the boy: "Attend to this stranger."

And he retreated to the fireplace. "But," resumed he, turning again toward Renzo, "we have no bread today."

"As to the bread," said Renzo, in a loud voice and laughing, "Providence has provided that." And drawing from his pocket the third and last loaf which he had picked up under the Cross of San Dionigi, he raised it in the air, exclaiming, "Behold the bread of Providence!" Many turned on hearing this exclamation; and, seeing such a trophy in the air, somebody called out, "Hurrah for bread at a low price!"

"At a low price?" said Renzo; "*Gratis et amore.*"

"Better still, better still."

"But," added he, immediately, "I should not like these gentlemen to think ill of me. I have not, as they say, stolen it: I found it on the ground; and if I could find its owner, I am ready to pay him for it."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried his companions, laughing more loudly, none thinking that these words seriously expressed a real fact and intention.

"They think I'm joking; but it's just so," said Renzo to his guide; and, turning the loaf over in his hand, he added: "See how they've crushed it; it looks like a cake: but there were plenty close by it! if any of them had had very tender bones they'd come badly off." Then, biting off and devouring three or four mouthfuls, he swallowed another glass of wine, and added: "This

bread won't go down alone. I never had so dry a throat."

"Prepare a good bed for this honest fellow," said the guide; "for he intends to sleep here."

"Do you wish a bed?" asked the landlord of Renzo, advancing toward the table.

"Certainly," replied he: "a bed, to be sure; only let the sheets be clean; for, though I'm but a poor lad, I'm accustomed to cleanliness."

"Oh! as to that," said the host; and going to a counter that stood in a corner of the kitchen, he returned with an inkstand and a little bit of writing-paper in one hand and a pen in the other.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Renzo, gulping down a mouthful of the stew that the boy had set before him, and then smiling in astonishment; "is this the white sheet, eh?"

Without making any reply, the landlord laid the paper on the table, and put the inkstand by the paper: then stooping forward, he rested his left arm on the table and his right elbow, and holding the pen in the air, with his face raised toward Renzo, said to him: "Will you be good enough to tell me your name, surname, and country?"

"What?" said Renzo; "what has all this to do with my bed?"

"I do my duty," said the host, looking toward the guide; "we are obliged to give an account and relation of every one that comes to sleep in our house; name and surname, and of what nation he is, on what business he comes, if he has any arms with him, how long he intends to stay in this city. They are the very words of the proclamation."

Before replying, Renzo swallowed another glass; it was the third. He then said, "Ah! ah! you have the proclamation! And I pride myself upon being a doctor

of law; so I know well enough what importance is attached to edicts."

"I speak in earnest," said the landlord, keeping his eye on Renzo's mute companion; and going again to the counter, he drew out a large sheet, an exact copy of the proclamation, and came to display it before Renzo.

"Ah! see!" exclaimed the youth, raising the refilled glass in one hand, and quickly emptying it, while he stretched out the other, and pointed with his finger toward the unfolded proclamation; "look at that fine sheet, like a missal. I'm delighted to see it. I know those arms; and I know what that heretical face means with a noose round its neck." (At the head of the edicts the arms of the governor were usually placed; and in those of Don Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova appeared a Moorish king, chained by the throat.)

"That face means: Command who can, and obey who will. When that face shall have sent to the galleys Signor Don —— never mind, I know who; as another parchment says, like this; when it has provided that an honest youth may marry an honest girl who is willing to be married to him, then I will tell my name to this face, and will give it a kiss into the bargain. I may have very good reasons for not telling my name. Oh, truly! And if a rascal, who had under his command a handful more of rascals; for if he were alone"—— Here he finished his sentence with a gesture: "If a rascal wanted to know where I am to do me an ill turn, I ask if that face would move itself to help me. I'm to tell my business! This is something new. Supposing I had come to Milan to confess, I should wish to confess to a Capuchin father, I beg to say, and not to a landlord."

The host was silent, and looked toward the guide, who gave no token of noticing what passed. Renzo, we grieve to say, swallowed another glass, and continued: "I will give you a reason, my dear landlord, which will

satisfy you. If those proclamations which speak in favor of good Christians are worth nothing, those which speak against them are worth still less. So carry away all these bothering things, and bring us instead another flask; for this is broken." So saying, he tapped it lightly with his knuckles, and added: "Listen, how it sounds like a cracked bottle."

Renzo's language had again attracted the attention of the party; and when he ceased, there arose a general murmur of approbation.

"What must I do?" said the host, looking at the incognito, who was, however, no stranger to him.

"Away, away with them," cried many of the guests; "this countryman has some sense; they are grievances, tricks, impositions; new laws to-day, new laws!"

In the midst of these cries, the incognito, glancing toward the landlord a look of reproof for this too public magisterial summons, said, "Let him have his own way a little; don't give any offence."

"I have done my duty," said the host, in a loud voice; and added, to himself, "Now I have my shoulders against the wall." He then removed the pen, ink, and paper, and took the empty flagon to give it to the boy.

"Bring the same sort of wine," said Renzo; "for I find it a worthy fellow, and will send it to sleep with the other, without asking its name or surname, and what is its business, and if it intends to stay any time in the city."

"Some more of the same sort," said the landlord to the boy, giving him the flask; and he returned to his seat under the chimney-piece. "More simple than a hare!" thought he, figuring away in the cinders, "and into what hands hast thou fallen! Thou great ass! If thou wilt drown, drown; but the landlord of the Full Moon isn't obliged to go shares in thy folly!"

Renzo returned thanks to his guide, and to all the

rest who had taken his part. "Brave friends," said he, "now I see clearly that honest fellows give each other a hand, and support each other." Then waving his hand in the air, over the table, and again assuming the air of a speaker, "Isn't it an admirable thing," exclaimed he, "that all our rulers will have pen, ink, and paper, intruding everywhere? Always a pen in the hand! They must have a mighty passion for wielding the pen!"

"Eh! you worthy countryman! would you like to know the reason?" said a winner in one of the games, laughing.

"Let us hear," replied Renzo.

"The reason is," said he, "that as these Signori eat geese, they find they have got so many quills that they are obliged to make something of them."

The unknown guide was impatient to take his departure; yet, though he had not, to all appearance, any business at the house, he would not go away till he had chatted a little with Renzo, individually. He, therefore, turned to him, and renewed the conversation about bread; and after a few of those expressions which had been, for some time, in everybody's mouth, he began to give his own opinion. "Eh! if I were ruling," said he, "I would find a way of making things right."

"How would you do?" asked Renzo, fixing on him two eyes more sparkling than usual.

"How would I do?" said he; "I would have bread for all: for poor as well as rich."

"Ah! so far, well," said Renzo.

"See how I would do. First, I would fix a moderate price, that everybody could reach. Then I would distribute bread according to the number of mouths. And how should that be done? See: give a note to every family, in proportion to the number of mouths, to go and get bread at the bake-houses. To me, for example, they should give a note of this kind: 'Ambrogio Fu-

sella, by trade a sword-cutler, with a wife and four children, all of an age to eat bread (note that well): let them have so much bread; and pay so many pence.' But to do things justly it must always be in proportion to the number of mouths. You, we will suppose, ought to have a note for—your name?"

"Lorenzo Tramaglino," said the youth; who, delighted with the plan, never recollected that it was entirely founded on paper, pen and ink, and that to put it in execution the first thing must be to get everybody's name.

"Very well," said the stranger; "but have you a wife and children?"

"I ought, indeed—children, no, too soon—but a wife—if the world went as it ought"—

"Ah, you are single! Well, have patience; but a smaller portion"—

"You are right; but if soon, as I hope—and by the help of God—Enough; and when I've a wife too?"

"Then change the note, and increase the quantity. As I said; always in proportion to the number of mouths," said the unknown, rising from his seat.

"That is all very good," cried Renzo; and he continued vociferously, as he struck his hand upon the table: "and why don't they make a law of this kind?"

"How can I tell? But I must bid you good night, and be off; for I fancy my wife and children have been looking out for me this good while."

"Just another little drop—another little drop," cried Renzo, hastily filling his glass; and, rising quickly, he seized the skirt of his doublet, and tried to force him to sit down again. "Another little drop; don't do me this insult."

But his friend disengaged himself with a sudden jerk, and, leaving Renzo to indulge in importunity and reproaches, again said, "Good night," and went away.

Nothing less than our love of truthfulness would induce us to prosecute a faithful account which does so little credit to so important a person, we may almost say, to the principal hero, of our story. From this same motive of impartiality, however, we must also state that this was the first time that such a thing happened to Renzo; and it was just because he was not accustomed to such excesses that his first attempt succeeded so fatally.

When these first fumes had mounted to Renzo's brain, wine and words continued to flow, one down, the other up, without measure or reason; and at the point where we have left him, he had got quite beyond his powers of self-government. He felt a great desire to talk: auditors, or at least men present whom he could imagine such, were not wanting; and for some time also words had readily occurred to him, and he had been able to arrange them in some sort of order. But by degrees his power of connecting sentences began woefully to fail.

"Ah, host, host," resumed he, following him with his eye round the table, or under the chimney-piece; sometimes gazing at him where he was not, and talking all the time in the midst of the uproar of the party; "what a landlord you are! I can not swallow this trick about the name, surname, and business. To a youth like me! You have not behaved well. What satisfaction now, what advantage, what pleasure, to put upon paper a poor youth? Don't I speak sense, gentlemen? Landlords ought to stand by good youths. Listen, listen, landlord; I will compare you....because....Do you laugh, eh! I am a little too far gone, I know....but the reasons I would give are right enough. Just tell me, now, who is it that keeps up your trade? Poor fellows, isn't it? See if any of these gentlemen of the proclamations ever come here to wet their lips."

"They are all people that drink water," said one of Renzo's neighbors.

"They want to have their heads clear," added another, "to be able to tell lies cleverly."

"Ah!" cried Renzo. "That was the poet who spoke then. Then you also understand my reason. Answer me, then, landlord; and Ferrer, who is the best of all, has he ever come here to drink a toast, or to spend a quarter of a farthing? And that dog of a villain, Don—I'll hold my tongue, because I'm a careful fellow. Ferrer and Father Cr-r-r—I know, they are two worthy men; but there are so few worthy men in the world. The old are worse than the young; and the young....worse again than the old. However, I am glad there has been no murdering; fie! cruelties that should be left for the hangman's hands. Bread; oh, yes! I got some great pushes, but....I gave some away too. Room! plenty! long live! I know what I'm thinking about!"

At these words he bent down his head, and remained some time as if absorbed in some idea; he then heaved a deep sigh, and raised a face with two piteous-looking eyes, and such an expression of disagreeable and stupid grief, that woe to him if the object of it could have seen him at that moment.

CHAPTER XV

A TIMELY VICTIM

THE landlord, seing the game was lasting too long, and being carried too far, had approached Renzo, and, with the greatest politeness, requesting the others to leave him alone, began shaking him by the arm, and tried to make him understand, and to persuade him that he had better go to bed. Renzo placed his open hands upon the table; tried once or twice to raise himself; sighed, staggered, and, at a third attempt, supported by his host, he stood upon his feet.

The landlord, steadying him as he walked along, guided him from between the bench and the table, and taking a lamp in one hand, partly conducted, and partly dragged him with the other, toward the door of the stairs.

"Let us go to bed," said the landlord, pushing him forward through the door; and with still more difficulty drawing him to the top of the narrow wooden staircase, and then into the room he had prepared for him. Renzo rejoiced on seeing his bed ready; he looked graciously upon his host, with eyes which one moment glistened more than ever, and the next faded away, like two fire-flies: he endeavored to steady himself on his legs, and stretched out his hand toward his host's cheek to take it between his first and middle fingers, in token of friendship and gratitude, but he could not succeed. "Brave landlord," he at last managed to stammer out; "now I see that you are a worthy fellow: this is a kind deed, to give a poor youth a bed; but that trick about the name and surname, that wasn't like a gentleman. By good luck, I saw through it"—

The landlord, who little thought he could have uttered anything so connected, and who knew, by long experience, how men in such a condition may be induced more easily than usual, suddenly to change their minds, was determined to take advantage of this lucid interval, to make another attempt.

"My dear fellow," said he, with a most coaxing tone and look, "I didn't do it to vex you, nor to pry into your affairs. What would you have? There are the laws; and we must obey them; otherwise we are the first to suffer the punishment. It is better to satisfy them. After all, what is it all about? A great thing, certainly, to say two words! Not, however, for them, but to do me a favor. Here, between ourselves, face to face, let us do our business; tell me your name and then go to bed with a quiet mind."

"Ah, rascal!" exclaimed Renzo; "cheat! you are again returning to the charge, with that infamous name, surname, and business!"

'Hold your tongue, simpleton, and go to bed," said the landlord.

But Renzo pursued more vehemently: "I understand: you are one of the league. Wait, wait, and I'll settle it." And directing his voice toward the head of the stairs, he began to shout more vociferously than ever, "Friends! the landlord is of the"—

"I only said it in joke," cried he, in Renzo's face, pushing him toward the bed—"in joke: didn't you understand that I only said it in joke?"

"Ah! in joke: now you speak sensibly. When you say in joke—They are just things to make a joke of." And he sank upon the bed.

"Here; undress yourself, and be quick," said the host, adding assistance to his advice; and there was need of it. When Renzo had succeeded in getting off his waistcoat, the landlord took it, and put his hands in the pockets to see whether there were any money in them. His search was successful; and thinking that his guest would have something else to do than to pay him on the morrow, and that this money would probably fall into hands whence a landlord would not easily be able to recover any share, he resolved to risk another attempt.

"You are a good youth, and an honest man, aren't you?" said he.

"Good youth, and honest man," replied Renzo, vainly endeavoring to undo the buttons of the clothes which he had not yet been able to take off.

"Very well," rejoined the host; "just settle, then, this little account; for to-morrow I must go out on some business."

"That's only fair," said Renzo; "I'm a fool, but I'm honest. But money? Am I to go look for money now?"

"It's here," said the inkeeper; and calling up all his practice, patience, and skill, he succeeded in settling the account, and securing the reckoning.

"Lend me a hand to finish undressing, landlord," said Renzo; "I'm beginning to feel very sleepy."

The landlord performed the required office: he then spread the quilt over him, and almost before he had time to say, disdainfully, "Good night!" Renzo was snoring fast asleep.

The landlord withdrew the light, and left the room, locking the door behind him. On the landing-place at the top of the stairs, he called the landlady, and bade her leave the children under the care of a young servant girl, and go down into the kitchen, to preside and keep guard in his stead. "I must go out, thanks to a stranger who has arrived here, to my misfortune," said he; and he briefly related the annoying circumstance. He then added: "Have your eyes everywhere; and, above all, be prudent this unfortunate day. There's a group of licentious fellows down below, who, between drink and their own inclination, are ready enough to talk, and will say anything. It will be enough, if a rash"—

"Oh, I'm not a child; and I know well enough what's to be done. I think you can't say that, up to this time"—

"Well, well; and be sure they pay; and pretend not to hear anything they say about the superintendent of provisions, and the governor, and Ferrer, and the decurioni, and the cavaliers, and Spain, and France, and such fooleries; for if you contradict them, you'll come off badly directly; and if you agree with them, you may fare badly afterward: and *you* know well enough, that sometimes those who say the worst things—But enough; when you hear certain sayings, turn away your head, and cry, 'I'm coming,' as if somebody was calling you from the other side; I'll come back as quick as I can."

So saying, he went down with her into the kitchen, and gave a glance round, to see if there was anything new of consequence; took down his hat and cloak from a peg, reached a short, thick stick out of the corner, summed up, in one glance at his wife, the instructions he had given her, and went out. But during these preparations, he had again resumed the thread of the apostrophe begun at Renzo's bedside; and continued it, even while proceeding on his walk.

"Obstinate fellow of a mountaineer!" For, however Renzo was determined to conceal his condition, this qualification had betrayed itself in his words, pronunciation, appearance, and actions. "Such a day as this, by good policy and judgment, I thought to have come off clear; and you must come in at the end of it, to spoil the egg in the hatching. Were there no other inns in Milan, that you must light upon mine? Would that you had even lighted upon it alone! I would then have shut my eyes to it to-night, and to-morrow morning would have given you a hint. But, no; you must come in company; and, to do better still, in company with a sheriff."

At these words the landlord reached the door of the court of the high sheriff.

Here, as at all the other secretaries' offices, much business was going forward. The soldiery round the house of the superintendent were increased, and the ends of the street were blockaded with timber, and barricaded with carts. They commanded all the bakers to make bread without intermission, and despatched couriers to the surrounding country, with orders to send grain to the city; while noblemen were stationed at every bake-house, who repaired thither early in the morning to superintend the distribution, and to restrain the factious, by fair words, and the authority of their presence. To render their cajolings more efficient by a little awe, they thought also of taking measures to seize some one of the seditious:

and this was principally the business of the high sheriff. His blood-hounds had been in the field from the beginning of the riot: and this self-styled Ambrogio Fusella was, as the landlord said, a disguised under-sheriff, sent about for the express purpose of catching in the act some one whom he could again recognize, whose motions he could watch, and whom he could keep in mind, so as to seize, either in the quiet of the evening or next morning. He had not heard four words of Renzo's harangue before he had fixed upon him as a capital object—exactly his man. Finding, afterward, that he was fresh from the country, he had attempted the master-stroke of conducting him at once to the prison, as the safest inn in the city, but here he failed, as we have related. He could, however, bring back certain information of his name, surname, and country; besides a hundred other fine conjectural pieces of information; so that when the innkeeper arrived here to tell what he knew of Renzo, they were already better acquainted with him than he. He entered the usual apartment, and deposed that a stranger had arrived at his house to lodge, who could not be persuaded to declare his name.

"You've done your duty in giving us this information," said a criminal notary, laying down his pen; "but we know it already."

"A strange mystery!" thought the host: "they must be wonderfully clever!"

"And we know, too," continued the notary, "this revered name."

"The name, too! how have they managed it?" thought the landlord again.

"But you," resumed the other, with a serious face, "you don't tell all, candidly."

"What more have I to say?"

"Ha! ha! we know very well that this fellow brought to your inn a quantity of stolen bread."

"A man comes, with one loaf in his pocket; do you think I know where he went to get it? for, to speak as on my deathbed, I can positively affirm that I saw but one loaf."

"There! always excusing and defending yourself: one would think to hear you, everybody was honest. How can you prove that his bread was fairly obtained?"

"Why am I to prove it? I don't meddle with it; I am an innkeeper."

"You cannot, however, deny that this customer of yours had the temerity to utter injurious words against the proclamations, and to make improper and shameful jokes on the arms of his Excellency."

"Pardon me, sir: how can he be called my customer, when this is the first time I've ever seen him. It was the devil (under your favor) that sent him to my house: and if I had known him, you, sir, know well enough I should have had no occasion to ask his name."

"Well: in your inn, in your presence, inflammatory speeches have been uttered, unadvised words, seditious propositions; murmurs, grumbles, outcries."

"How can you expect, my good sir, that I should attend to the extravagances which so many noisy fellows, talking all at the same time, may chance to utter? I must attend to my interest, for I'm only badly off. And besides, your worship knows well enough that those who are lavish of their tongues are generally ready with their fists too, particularly when there are so many together."

"Ay, leave them alone to talk and fight: to-morrow you'll see if their tricks have gone out of their heads. What do you think?"

"I think nothing about it."

"Have you many people still in your house?"

"A world of them."

"And this customer of yours, what is he doing? Does

he still continue to be clamorous, to excite the people, and arouse sedition?"

"That stranger, your worship means; he's gone to bed."

"Then, you've many people. Well, take care not to let them go away."

"Am I to be a constable?" thought the landlord, without replying, either negatively or affirmatively.

"Go home again, and be careful," resumed the notary.

"I've always been careful. Your honor can say whether I have ever made any opposition to justice."

"Well, well; and don't think that justice has lost its power."

"I! I think nothing: I only attend to my business."

"Take care you don't let him go."

"I hope that his worship the high sheriff will be informed that I came immediately to discharge my duty. Your honor's humble servant."

By break of day, Renzo had been snoring for about seven hours, and was still, poor fellow, fast asleep, when two rough shakes at either arm, and a voice at the foot of the bed, calling, "Lorenzo Tramaglino!" recalled him to his senses. He shook himself, stretched his arms, and with difficulty opening his eyes, saw a man standing before him at the foot of the bed, dressed in black, and two others armed, one on the right and the other on the left of his pillow. Between surprise, not being fully awake, and the stupidity occasioned by the wine of the night before, he lay, for a moment, as if bewildered; and then, thinking he was dreaming, and not being very well pleased with this dream, he shook himself so as to awake thoroughly.

"Ah! have you heard, for once, Lorenzo Tramaglino?" said the man with the black cloak, the very notary of the night before. "Up; up, then; get up, and come with us."

"Lorenzo Tramaglino!" said Renzo; "what does this

mean? What do you want with me? Who's told you my name?"

"Less talk, and up with you directly," said one of the bailiffs who stood at his side, taking him again by the arm.

"Ah, eh! what oppression is this?" cried Renzo, withdrawing his arm. "Landlord! ho, landlord!"

"Shall we carry him off in his shirt?" said the bailiff again, looking toward the notary.

"Did you hear that?" said he to Renzo; "they'll do so, if you don't get up as quick as thought, and come with us."

"And what for?" asked Renzo.

"The *what for* you will hear from the high sheriff."

"I? I'm an honest man; I've done nothing; and I'm astonished!"—

"So much the better for you—so much the better for you; for then you may be discharged with two words, and may go about your business."

"Let me go now," said Renzo: "I've nothing to do with justice."

"Come, let us finish the business," said one of the bailiffs.

"Shall we carry him off?" said the other.

"Lorenzo Tramaglino!" said the notary.

"How do you know my name, sir?"

"Do your duty," said the notary to the bailiffs, who immediately laid hands on Renzo to pull him out of bed.

"Hey! don't you touch a hair of an honest fellow! I know how to dress myself."

"Then dress yourself, and get up directly," said the notary.

"I'm getting up," replied Renzo; and he began, in fact, to gather up his clothes, which were scattered here and there on the bed, like the relics of a shipwreck on the shore. And beginning to dress himself, he continued:

"But I'm not inclined to go to the high sheriff, not I. I've nothing to do with him. Since you unjustly put this affront upon me, I should like to be conducted to Ferrer. I know him; I know that he's a gentleman, and he's under some obligation to me."

"Yes, yes, my good fellow, you shall be conducted to Ferrer," replied the notary. In other circumstances he would have laughed heartily at such a proposal; but this was not a time for merriment.

Our unlucky Renzo busied himself, while dressing as quickly as possible, in recalling the confused remembrances of the day before, and at last conjectured, with tolerable certainty, that the proclamation, and the name and surname, must be the cause of this disagreeable occurrence; but however did this fellow know his name? At last, as well to satisfy his conjectures, and sound the officers, as to gain time, and even attempt a blow, he said: "I understand well enough the origin of all this; it is all from love of name and surname. Last night I certainly was a little muddled: these landlords have sometimes very treacherous wines; and sometimes, as I say, you know, when wine passes through the medium of words, it will have its say too. But if this is all, I am now ready to give you every satisfaction; and, besides, you know my name already. Who on earth told you?"

"Bravo, my boy, bravo!" replied the notary, coaxingly; "I see you've some sense; and believe me, who am in the business, that you're wiser than most. It is the best way of getting out of the difficulty quickly and easily; and with such good dispositions, in two words you will be dismissed and set at liberty. But I, do you see, my good fellow, have my hands tied; I can not release you, as I should like to do. Come, be quick, and come along with a good heart; for when they see who you are— Leave it to me. Enough; be quick, my good fellow."

"Ah! you can not! I understand," said Renzo; and he

continued to dress himself, repulsing by signs the intimations of the bailiffs that they would carry him off if he were not very expeditious.

"Shall we pass the square of the cathedral?" said he.

"Wherever you like; the shortest way, to set you the sooner at liberty," said the notary, vexed in his heart, that he must let this mysterious inquiry of Renzo's pass, which might have served as the subject for a hundred interrogatives.

Renzo now stood between the two satellites, having one on each side; the notary beckoned to them not to use too much force, and said to him, "Courage, like a good fellow; let us be off, and make haste."

Renzo, however, was feeling, looking, thinking. He was now entirely dressed, excepting his jacket, which he held in one hand, and feeling with the other in his pockets: "Oho!" said he, looking at the notary with a very significant expression; "here there were some pence, and a letter, my good sir!"

"Everything shall be punctually restored to you," said the notary, "when these few formalities are properly executed. Let us go."

"No," said Renzo, shaking his head, "that won't do; I want my money, my good sir. I will give an account of my doings; but I want my money."

"I'll show you that I trust you; here, and be quick," said the notary, drawing out of his bosom the sequestered articles, and handing them to Renzo with a sigh. Renzo received them, and put them into his pocket, muttering between his teeth: "Stand off! you've associated so much with thieves, that you've learned a little of their business."

While Renzo was putting on his jacket and taking up his hat, the notary beckoned to one of the bailiffs to lead the way down-stairs; the prisoner came next behind him, then the other kind friend, and he himself brought up

the rear. On reaching the kitchen, and while Renzo was saying, "And this blessed landlord, where is he fled to?" the notary made a sign to the two police-officers, who, seizing each a hand, proceeded hastily to secure his wrists with certain instruments, called, in the hypocritical figure of euphemism, *ruffles*—in plain language handcuffs.

Renzo struggled, and cried, "What treachery is this? To an honest man!"

But the notary, who had fair words at hand on every disagreeable occasion, replied: "Have patience, they only do their duty. What would you have? They are only formalities; and we can't always treat people as we would wish. If we don't do as we're bid, it will fare badly with us, and worse with you. Have patience!"

While he was speaking, the two bailiffs gave a sudden twitch at the handcuffs. Renzo bore it as a restive horse bears the jerk of a severe bit, and exclaimed, "Patience!"

"Brave youth!" said the notary; "this is the best way of getting off well. What would you have? It is an annoyance, I know; but if you behave well, you'll very soon be rid of it.... You shall go about your own business, and nobody will know that you've been in the hands of justice. And you," continued he, turning to the two bailiffs, with a severe countenance, "take care you don't do him any harm; for I will protect him. You are obliged to do your duty; but remember that this is an honest man, a civil youth, who will shortly be at liberty, and who has some regard for his honor. Let nothing appear but that you are three honest men walking together." And the convoy moved off.

No sooner were they in the street, than Renzo began to look eagerly in every direction, throwing himself about, bending his head forward, and listening attentively. There was, however, no extraordinary concourse; and though a certain air of sedition might easily

be discerned on the face of more than one passer-by, yet every one went straight on his way; and of sedition, properly speaking, there was none.

"Prudence! prudence!" murmured the notary, behind his back; "your honor, your reputation, my good fellow!" But when Renzo, listening to three men who were approaching with excited looks, heard them speaking of a bake-house, concealed flour, and justice, he began to make signs at them by his looks, and to cough in such a way as indicated anything but a cold. These looked more attentively at the convoy, and then stopped; others who came up stopped also; others who had passed by, turned round on hearing the noise, and retracing their steps, joined the party.

"Take care of yourself; prudence, my lad; it is worse for you, you see; don't spoil all: honor, reputation," whispered the notary. Renzo was still more intractable. The bailiffs, after consulting with each other by a look, and thinking they were doing quite right (everybody is liable to err), again twisted the manacles.

"Ah! ah! ah!" cried the tortured victim: the bystanders gathered close round at the cry; others arrived from every part of the street, and the convoy came to a stand. "He is a dissolute fellow," whispered the notary to those who had gathered around; "a thief taken in the act! Draw back and make way for justice!" But Renzo, seeing this was the moment—seeing the bailiffs turn white, or at least pale, "If I don't help myself now," thought he, "it's my own fault." And he immediately called out: "My friends! they are carrying me off, because yesterday I shouted 'Bread and justice!' I've done nothing; I am an honest man! help me; don't abandon me, my friends!"

A murmur of approbation arose in reply; the bailiffs first commanded, then asked, then begged the nearest to make way and let them pass; but the crowd only

continued still more to trample and push forward. The bailiffs, seeing their danger, let go of the manacles, and only endeavored to lose themselves in the throng, so as to escape without observation. The notary earnestly longed to do the same; but this was more difficult, on account of his black cloak. The poor man, pale in face and dismayed in heart, tried to make himself as diminutive as possible, and writhed his body about so as to slip away through the crowd; but he could not raise his eyes, without seeing a storm gathering against him. He tried every method of appearing a stranger who, passing there by chance, had found himself entangled in the crowd, like a bit of straw in the ice; and encountering a man face to face, who looked at him fixedly with a more terrible countenance than the others, he, composing his face to a smile, with a look of great simplicity, demanded, "What is all this stir?"

"Ugh! you ugly raven!" replied the man. "A raven! a raven!" resounded around. Pushes were added to cries; so that, in short, partly with his own legs, partly by the elbows of others, he obtained what lay nearest to his heart at that moment, a safe exit from the pressing multitude.

CHAPTER XVI

UNPLEASANT NEWS

"ESCAPE, escape, my good fellow! here is a convent; there is a church; this, way, that way," was heard by Renzo on every side. As to escaping, the reader may judge whether he would have need of advice on this head. From the first moment that the hope of extricating himself from the talons of the police had crossed his mind, he had begun to form his plans, and resolved, if he succeeded in this

one, to flee without delay, not only out of the city, but also out of the duchy of Milan. He had designed, as his limit and place of refuge, a village in the territory of Bergamo, where his cousin Bortolo resided, who had frequently solicited Renzo to remove thither. But now the point was how to find his way there.

Saying, then, to his deliverers, "Thank you, thank you, my friends; blessings on you!" and escaping through the space that was immediately cleared for him, he took to his heels, and off he went, up one little street, and down another, running for some time without knowing whither. When he thought he was far enough off, he slackened his pace, so as not to excite suspicion, and began looking round to choose some person of whom he could make inquiries—some face that would inspire confidence. At last, fixing his eyes on one who was approaching in evident haste, he thought that he, having probably some pressing business in hand, would give an immediate and direct answer, to get rid of him; and, hearing him talking to himself, he deemed that he must be an undesigning person. He, therefore, accosted him with the question, "Will you be good enough to tell me, sir, which direction I should take to go to Bergamo?"

"To go to Bergamo? The Porta Orientale."

"Thank you, sir: and to the Porta Orientale?"

"Take this street to the left; you will come out into the square of the cathedral; then"—

"That will do, sir; I know the rest. Heaven reward you!" And on he went by the way that had been pointed out to him.

Renzo reached the square of the cathedral, crossed it, passed by a heap of cinders and extinguished combustibles, and recognized the relics of the bonfire at which he had assisted the day before; he then passed along the flight of steps leading up to the cathedral, and saw again the bake-house of the Crutches.

Here he stopped a moment to reconnoiter the gate through which he had to pass. He looked behind him to see whether anyone was coming in that direction, and saw no one who seemed to be taking notice of him. He, therefore, set off again, and, proceeding leisurely along, whistling in an undertone, he arrived at the gate.

On he went; he came to cottages and villages, which he passed without asking their names: he felt certain of getting away from Milan, and hoped he was going toward Bergamo, and this was enough for him at present.

By-and-by, however, he became more anxious about finding his way; and after walking for some distance at a venture, he saw the necessity of making some inquiries. Yet he felt particularly reluctant to utter the word "Bergamo," as if there were something suspicious or dangerous in the name. He resolved, however, to ask direction, as he had before done at Milan.

While ruminating on the best way of obtaining these instructions without exciting suspicion, he saw a bush hanging over the door of a solitary cottage just outside a little village. He had for some time felt the need of recruiting his strength, and thinking that this would be the place to serve two purposes at once, he entered. No one was within but an old woman, with her distaff at her side, and the spindle in her hand. He asked for something to eat, and was offered a little stracchino and some good wine; he gladly accepted the food, but excused himself from taking any wine, feeling quite an abhorrence of it, after the errors it had made him guilty of the night before; and then sat down, begging the old woman to make haste. She served his meal in a moment, and then began to tease her customer with inquiries, both about himself and the grand doings at Milan, the report of which had already reached here. Renzo not only contrived to parry and elude her inquiries with much dexterity, but even profited by the difficulty, and made the

curiosity of the old woman subservient to his intentions, when she asked him where he was going.

"I have to go to many places," replied he: "and if I can find a moment of time, I want to pass a little while at that village, rather a large one, on the road to Bergamo, near the border, but in the territory of Milan—What do they call it?"—There must be one there, surely, thought he, in the mean while.

"Gorgonzola, you mean," replied the old woman.

"Gorgonzola!" repeated Renzo, as if to imprint the word better on his memory. "Is it very far from here?"

"I don't know exactly; it may be ten or twelve miles."

"And do you think I can go by these pleasant lanes without taking the high road? There is such a dust there! It is so long since it rained!"

"I fancy you can: you can ask at the first village you come to, after turning to the right." And she named it.

"That's well," said Renzo; and rising, he took in his hand a piece of bread remaining from his scanty meal, of a very different quality from that which he had found the day before at the foot of the cross of San Dionigi; and paying the reckoning, he set off again, following the road to the right hand. By taking care not to wander from it more than was needful, and with the name of Gorgonzola in his mouth, he proceeded from village to village, until, about an hour before sunset, he arrived there.

After walking a few paces along the street at Gorgonzola, he noticed a sign, entered the inn, and on the landlord's advancing to meet him, ordered something to eat, and a small measure of wine; the additional miles he had passed, and the time of day having overcome his hatred of this beverage. "I must beg you to be quick," added he; "for I'm obliged to go on my way again very soon."

Some loungers of the village had assembled in this room, who, after arguing over, and discussing, and com-

menting upon, the grand news from Milan of the preceding day, were now longing to know a little how matters were going on. One of these detached himself from the party, and seating himself by the new comer, asked him whether he came from Milan.

"I come from Liscate," replied the youth, promptly, who in the mean while, had decided upon his reply. Strictly speaking he had come from there, because he had passed it; and he had learned the name from a traveler on the road, who had mentioned that village as the first he must pass on his way to Gorgonzola.

"Oh!" said his friend, in that tone which seems to say that he would have done better had he come from Milan. "And at Liscate," added he, " did you hear nothing about Milan?"

"There may have been somebody who knew something about it," replied the mountaineer, "but I heard nothing." The querist returned to his party, and a moment afterward the landlord came with Renzo's meal.

"How far is it from here to the Adda?" asked Renzo, with the air of one who is half asleep.

"You may reckon that to either bridge or ferry, it is somewhere about six miles, more or less."

"Six miles! I didn't know that," said Renzo. "Well," resumed he, with a still greater air of indifference, "well, I suppose there are other places for crossing, if anybody is inclined to take a short cut?"

There are, certainly" replied the landlord, fixing his eyes upon him with a look full of malicious curiosity. This was enough to silence all the other inquiries which our youth had ready on his lips.

"Plague on these landlords!" exclaimed Renzo in his heart; "the more I know of them, the worse I find them." However, he began to eat very heartily, listening at the same time to discover what was the general impression here about the event in which he had had a share.

"But," said one, "this time, it seems clear the Milanese wanted to bring about a good thing. Well, to-morrow, at latest, we shall know something."

"I'm sorry I didn't go to Milan this morning," said another.

"What I want to know," resumed the first, "is, whether these Milanese gentlemen will think of us poor people out of the city; or if they'll only get good laws made for themselves."

"There's grain hidden, not only at Milan," another was beginning, with a dark and designing countenance, when they heard the trampling of a horse approaching; they ran to the door, and having discovered who it was, they all went out to meet him. It was a Milanese merchant, who usually passed the night at this inn, in journeying two or three times a year to Bergamo on business; and as he almost always found the same company there, they were all his acquaintances. They now crowded around him; one took his bridle, another his stirrup, and saluted him with "Welcome!"

"I'm glad to see you; and how are you all?"

"Pretty well. What news from Milan?"

"Ah! you are always for news," said the merchant, dismounting, and leaving his horse in the care of a boy. "And besides," continued he, entering the door with the rest of the party, "by this time you know it, perhaps, better than I do."

"I assure you we know nothing," said more than one, each laying his hand on his heart.

"Is it possible?" said the merchant. "Then you shall hear some fine, or rather, some bad news. Hey, landlord, is my usual bed at liberty? Very well; a glass of wine, and my usual meal; be quick, for I must go to bed early, and set off to-morrow morning very early, so as to get to Bergamo by dinner-time. And you," continued he, sitting down at the opposite end of the table at which

Renzo was seated, silently but attentively listening, "you don't know about all the diabolical doings of yesterday?"

"Yes, we heard something about yesterday."

"You see now!" rejoined the merchant; "you know the news. I thought, when you are stationed here all day, to watch and sound everybody that comes by"—

"But to-day: how have matters gone to-day?"

"Ah, to-day. Do you know nothing about to-day?"

"Nothing whatever; nobody has come by."

"Then let me wet my lips; and afterward I'll tell you about everything. You shall hear." Having filled his glass, he took it in his right hand, and, lifting up his mustachios with the first two fingers of his left, and then settling his beard with the palm, he drank it off, and continued: "There was little wanting, my worthy friends, to make to-day as rough a day as yesterday, or worse. This morning, those rascals who made such a horrible uproar yesterday, repaired to the appointed places of meeting and began again the old story of going from street to street, shouting, to collect a crowd. When they thought they had assembled enough people, they set off toward the house of the superintendent of provisions; as if the treatment they gave him yesterday was not enough, to a gentleman of his character—the villains! And the lies they told about him! And such things as they uttered! enough to make one stop one's ears, if it had not been that it might have turned to account in discovering one. They went forward then with the kind intention of plundering the house, but they found the street blockaded with planks and carts, and behind this barricade a good file of soldiers, with their guns leveled, and the butt-ends resting on their shoulders. When they saw this preparation they turned back.

"But just listen if it wasn't the devil that inspired them. They reached the Cordusio, and there saw the bake-house which they wanted to plunder the day before: here they

were busy in distributing bread to their customers; there were noblemen there, ay, the very flower of the nobility, to watch that everything went on in good order; but the mob rushed in furiously. 'Seize away, and I will seize too:' in the twinkling of an eye, noblemen, bakers, customers, loaves, benches, counters, troughs, chests, bags, sieves, bran, flour, dough, all were turned upside down."

"And the soldiers?"

"The soldiers had the vicar's house to defend; one can not sing and carry the cross at the same time. It was all done in the twinkling of an eye, I tell you: off and away; everything that could be put to any use was carried off. And then they proposed again the beautiful scene of yesterday—dragging the rest to the square, and making a bonfire. They had already begun—the villains!—to carry some things out of the house, when one greater villain than the rest—what do you think was the proposal he made?"

"What?"

"What! to make a pile of everything in the shop, and to set fire to the heap and the house together. No sooner said than done."

"Did they set fire to it?"

"Wait! A worthy man of the neighborhood had an inspiration from Heaven. He ran upstairs, sought for a crucifix, found one, and hung it in front of one of the windows; then he took two candles which had been blessed, lighted them, and set them outside, on the window-sill, one on each side of the crucifix. The mob looked up. It must be owned, there is still some fear of God in Milan; everybody came to his senses. Just fancy now who arrived—all their Graces of the Cathedral, in procession, with the cross elevated, and in their canonical robes; and my lord the Arch-presbyter began preaching on one side, and my lord the Penitentiary on the other, and others again, scattered here and there: 'But, good

people; what would you do? is this the example you set your children? go home, go home; you shall have bread at a low price; if you'll only look, you'll see that the rate is pasted up at every corner.'"

"Was it so?"

"What? was it so? Do you think that their Graces of the Cathedral would come, in their magnificent robes, to tell them falsehoods?"

"And what did the people do?"

"They dispersed by degrees; some ran to the corners of the streets, and for those who could read, there was the fixed rate, sure enough. What do you think of it? eight ounces of bread for a penny."

"What good luck!"

"The proof of a pudding is in the eating. How much flour do you think they have wasted yesterday and this morning? Enough to support the Duchy for two months."

"Then they've made no good laws for us?"

"What has been done at Milan is entirely at the expense of the city. I don't know what to say to you: it must be as God wills. Fortunately, the sedition is finished, for I haven't told you all yet; here comes the best part."

"What is there besides?"

"Only, that, last evening, or this morning, I'm not sure which, many of the leaders have been seized, and four of them, it is known, are to be hanged directly. No sooner did this get abroad, than everybody went home the shortest way, not to run the risk of becoming number five. When I left Milan, it looked like a convent of friars."

"But will they really hang them?"

"Undoubtedly, and quickly, too," replied the merchant.

"And what will the people do?" asked the same interrogator that had put the other question.

"The people will go to see them," said the merchant. "They had such a desire to see a Christian hanging in the open air, that they wanted—the vagabonds!—to despatch the superintendent of provisions in that way. By this exchange they will have four wretches, attended with every formality, accompanied by Capuchins, and by friars of the *buona morte*: but they deserve it."

"All this uproar had been projected for some time: there was a league, you know," the merchant continued.

"A league, was there?"

"Yes, there was a league. All cabals formed by the Navarrines, by that French cardinal there, you know, with a half-Turkish name, who every day contrives something fresh to annoy the court of Spain. But, above all, he aims at playing some trick in Milan; for he knows well enough—the knave!—that the strength of the King lies there."

"Ay."

"Shall I give you a proof of it? Those who've made the greatest noise were strangers; there were faces going about that never had been seen before in Milan. By the by, I forgot to tell you one thing which was told me for certain. The police had caught one of these fellows in an inn"— Renzo, who had not lost a single syllable of this conversation, was taken with a cold shudder on hearing this chord touched, and almost slipped under the table before he thought of trying to contain himself. No one perceived it; and the speaker countinued: "They don't exactly know where he came from, who sent him, nor what kind of man he was, but he was certainly one of the leaders. Yesterday, in the midst of the uproar, he played the very devil; and then, not content with that, he must begin to harangue the people, and propose—a mere trifle!—to murder all the nobility! The rascal! Who would support the poor if all the nobles were killed? The police, who had been watching him, laid hands upon

him; they found on his person a great bundle of letters, and were leading him away to prison, but his companions, who were keeping guard round the inn, came in great numbers, and delivered him—the villain!"

"And what became of him?"

"It isn't known; he may be fled, or he may be concealed in Milan. For the present, it is well known that the letters are in the possession of the government, and the whole conspiracy is therein described; and they say that many people are implicated in it."

Renzo's small meal had turned to poison. It seemed like an age before he could get out of, and away from, the inn and the village; and a dozen times, at least, he had said to himself, "Now I may surely go." But the fear of exciting suspicion, now increased beyond measure, and prevailing over every other thought, had kept him still nailed to his seat.

Presently the landlord, who had been eagerly listening with the rest, advanced toward the other end of the table to see what the stranger was doing. Renzo seized the opportunity, and beckoning to the host, asked for his account, settled it without dispute, though his purse was by this time very low; and went directly to the door, passed the threshold, and, taking care not to turn along the same road as that by which he had arrived, set off in the opposite direction.

CHAPTER XVII

ACROSS THE ADDA

ONE wish is often enough to allow a man no peace; what, then, must two have been—one at war with the other? Our poor Renzo, as the reader knows, had had two such conflicting desires in his mind for several hours; the wish to

make his escape, with the wish to remain undiscovered; and the unfortunate words of the merchant had increased both one and the other to an extravagant degree. Although, as he left Gorgonzola, the tolling of the Ave Maria sounded in his ears, and the increasing darkness every moment diminished his danger, yet he took the high-road very unwillingly, proposing to follow the first by-lane which seemed likely to bring him to the point he was so anxious to reach.

Very soon he saw a lane turning down to the left, and he pursued it. At this hour, if he had met with anyone, he would no longer have hesitated to address him; but he heard not a footstep of a living creature.

On he went, till he reached a part where the country changed from cultivated fields into a heath of ferns and broom. This seemed, if not a sure indication, at least, a kind of argument that there was a river in the neighborhood; and he advanced across the common, pursuing the path which traversed it. After walking a few paces, he stopped to listen; but in vain.

Continuing his way, with more impatience than alacrity, he saw scattered occasionally throughout these patches a solitary tree; and, still following the guidance of the foot-path, perceived that he was entering a wood. He felt a kind of reluctance to proceed; but he conquered it, and unwillingly went forward. A noise reached him, a murmur—a murmur of running water. He listens; assures himself; and exclaims, "It's the Adda!" It was like the restoration of a friend, of a brother, of a deliverer.

At last he reached the extremity of the flat, at the edge of a steep declivity; and, peeping through the bushes that everywhere covered its surface, he discerned, at the bottom, the glittering of the running water. Then, raising his eyes, he surveyed the extensive plain on the opposite side, scattered with villages; beyond this the hills, and

on one of these a large, whitish tract, in which he fancied he could distinguish a city—Bergamo, undoubtedly.

He stood a moment to consult with himself what were best to be done. Suddenly he remembered having seen a cascinotto in one of the fields adjoining the uncultivated down. Thus the peasants of the Milanese plain designate certain little cottages, thatched with straw, constructed of the trunks and branches of trees, fastened together and filled up with mud, where they are in the habit of depositing their harvest during the summer season, repairing thither at night to protect it: during the rest of the year they are usually unoccupied. He quickly fixed upon this as his resting-place for the night; and again setting off on his way, repassed the wood, the tract of bushes, and the heath; and entering upon the cultivated land, he espied the cascinotto, and went toward it. On entering, he saw a little straw lying on the ground, and thought that, even there, sleep would be very welcome.

Before stretching his weary frame on the bed Providence had prepared for him, he knelt down to offer up his thanks for this blessing, and for all the assistance he had received that terrible day. He then repeated his usual prayers; and, having finished them, begged pardon of God for having omitted them the evening before, and gone to rest, as he said, like a dog, or even worse. "And for this reason," added he to himself, "I was awaked by such agreeable visitors in the morning."

When, at last, dawn appeared, Renzo rose, half benumbed with the cold, and falling upon his knees, repeated his matin prayers with more than ordinary devotion; then, standing up, he stretched his limbs, and shook his body, as if to settle and unite his members, which seemed almost dissevered from one another, breathed upon his hands and rubbed them together, and then opened the door of the cascinotto, first taking the pre-

caution to look warily about him, perchance any one might be there. No one being visible, he cast his eye round to discover the path he had followed the preceding evening, and quickly recognizing it, much clearer and more distinct than his memory pictured it, he set off in that direction.

The sky announced a beautiful day: the pale and rayless moon was yet visible near the horizon, in the spacious field of azure, still softened by a tinge of morning grey, which shaded gradually toward the east, into a rosy and primrose hue. Still nearer the horizon, light and fleecy clouds, mingling with each other, and of a thousand nameless hues, floated on the surface of the placid heavens; a true Lombard sky, so beautiful when it is beautiful—so brilliant, so calm. Had Renzo been here to enjoy himself, he would certainly have looked upward, and admired a dawn different from what he had been accustomed to see among his native mountains; but his eyes were bent to the ground, and he walked on rapidly, both to regain a little warmth and to reach the river as quickly as he could. He hastily descended the shortest way through the bushes, stood upon the bank, and gently called to the fisherman; and with the intention of appearing to ask a favor of little importance, but, without being aware of it, in a half-supplicatory manner, beckoned to him to approach. The fisherman cast a glance along the shore, looked carefully both up and down the river, and then turning the prow toward Renzo, approached the side. Renzo, who stood at the very edge of the stream, almost with one foot in the water, seized the prow as it drew near, and jumped into the boat.

"Be good enough to take me across to the other side, and I'll pay you for it," said he. The fisherman had already guessed his object, and had turned the prow to the opposite bank. Renzo, seeing another oar at the bottom of the boat, stooped down and took it up.

"Softly, softly," said the owner; but on seeing how dextrously the youth laid hold of the implement, and prepared to handle it, "Aha!" added he, "you know your business."

"A little," replied Renzo; and he began to row with a vigor and skill beyond those of an amateur. While thus exerting himself, he cast an occasional dark glance at the shore he had just left, and then a look of anxiety at the one they were approaching.

Addressing the fisherman, and nodding with his head toward the whitish spot he had noticed the night before, which now appeared much more distinct, "Is that Bergamo?" said he, "that town?"

"The city of Bergamo," replied the fisherman.

"And that shore, there, does it belong to Bergamo?"

"The territory of Saint Mark."

"Long live Saint Mark!" exclaimed Renzo.

At last they reached the opposite shore; Renzo jumped out upon it, and, thanking God in his heart, expressed his gratitude in words to the boatman, then putting his hand in his pocket, he drew out thence a berlinga—which, considering his circumstances, was no little loss to him—and handed it to the worthy man, who, giving another glance at the Milanese shore, and along the river in either direction, stretched out his hand, and received the gift.

Renzo paused a moment on the bank, to contemplate the opposite shore—that ground which just before had almost burned beneath his feet.—Ah! I am really out of it!—was his first thought.—Hateful country that you are!—was his second, bidding it farewell. But the third recurred to those whom he had left there. Then he crossed his arms on his breast, and heaved a sigh.

He turned his back upon these mournful objects, and went forward, taking, for a mark, the white tract on the side of the hill, until he met with some one to give him

more particular directions in his way. It was amusing to see with what carelessness and disembarrassment he now accosted travelers, and how boldly he pronounced the name of the village where his cousin resided, without hesitation or disguise. From the first person who directed him, he learned that he had yet nine miles to travel.

His journey was not very blithesome. Independent of his own troubles, his eye rested every moment on pitiable objects, which told him that he would find in the country he was entering the poverty he had left in his own.

"Who knows," thought he, as he went along, "if I shall find anything to do? if there is any work now to be got, as there used to be? Well; Bortolo is kindly inclined to me; he is a good fellow; he has made some money, and has invited me very often; he, surely, won't forsake me. Besides, Providence has helped me hitherto and will help me, I hope, for the future."

In the mean while, his appetite, already considerably sharpened, became, as he went on his way, more and more craving; and though he felt that he could manage very well to the end of his journey, which was now only about two miles, without great inconvenience, yet he reflected that it would not be exactly the thing to make his appearance before his cousin like a beggar, and address him with the salutation, "Give me something to eat;" so drawing all his riches from his pocket, he counted them over on the palm of his hand. It was an amount that required little calculation, however, there was more than enough to make a small meal; he therefore entered an inn to get a little refreshment; and, on paying the account, found that he had still a few pence remaining.

The refreshment had gladdened and cheered all his thoughts. During the remainder of his walk, as his mind recurred to the different circumstances and contingencies

which had hitherto appeared the most dark and perplexing, all seemed to brighten.

At length he reached his cousin's village; and, just at the entrance, before he set foot in it, he distinguished a house considerably higher than the rest, with several rows of long windows, one above another, and separated by a much smaller space than the divisions between the different stories required: he at once recognized a silk-mill; and going in, asked, in a loud voice, so as to be heard amid the noise of the running water and the machinery, whether Bortolo Castagneri lived there.

"The Signor Bortolo! He's there."

—The Signor! that's a good sign—thought Renzo; and, seeing his cousin, he ran toward him. Bortolo turned round, recognized his relative, as he exclaimed, "Here I am, myself," and received him with an "Oh!" of surprise, as they threw their arms round each other's neck. After the first welcome, Bortolo took his cousin into another room, apart from the noise of the machinery and the eyes of the curious, and greeted him with, "I'm very glad to see you; but you're a pretty fellow. I've invited you so often, and you never would come; and now you arrive in a rather troubled time."

"Since you will have me tell you, I've not come of my own good will," said Renzo; and then, as briefly as possible, and not without some emotion, he related his mournful story.

"That's quite another thing," said Bortolo. "Oh, poor Renzo! But you've depended upon me; and I'll not forsake you. Certainly, there's no great demand for workmen just now; indeed, it's all we can do not to turn off those we have, and give up the business; but my master likes me, and he has some money. And, to tell you the truth, without boasting, he owes it mostly to me; he has the capital, and I give my abilities, such as they are. I'm the head workman, you know; and, besides, between

you and me, I'm quite his factotum. Poor Lucia Mondella! I remember her as it were but yesterday: a good girl she was! always the best-behaved in church; and whenever one passed her cottage there was the reel always going, going, going. And that Don Rodrigo! even in my time he was inclined that way; but now he's playing the devil outright, from what I hear, so long as God leaves him to take his own course. Well, as I was saying, here, too, we are suffering a little from the famine—apropos, how are you for appetite?"

"I got something to eat, a little while ago, on the road."

"And how are you for money?"

Renzo held out one of his hands, and putting it to his mouth, gently puffed upon it.

"Never mind," said Bortolo; "I've plenty; pluck up heart, for I hope things will soon change, please God; and then you can repay me, and lay up also a little for yourself."

"I've a trifling sum at home, and will send for it."

"Very well; and, in the mean time, you may depend upon me. God has given me wealth, that I might give to others; and whom should I serve so soon as my own relatives and friends?"

"I said I should be provided for!" exclaimed Renzo, affectionately pressing his good cousin's hand.

"Then," rejoined his companion, "they've had a regular uproar at Milan! I think they're all a little mad. The rumor had already reached here; but I want you to tell me things a little more particularly. Here, you see, we go about it more quietly, and do things with rather more prudence. The city purchased two thousand loads of grain, from a merchant who lives at Venice: the grain came from Turkey; but when life depends upon it, such things are not looked into very narrowly. See now what this occasioned: the governors of Verona and Brescia

stopped up the passes, and said, 'No grain shall pass this way.' What did the Bergamascans do, think you? They despatched a man to Venice, who knew how to talk. The messenger went off in haste, presented himself to the Doge, and asked him what was the meaning of such a trick. And such a speech he made! they say, fit to be printed. What a thing it is to have a man who knows what to say! An order was immediately issued for the free transit of grain, requiring the governors not only to let it pass, but to assist in forwarding it; and now it is on its way. Another worthy man gave the senate to understand that the people in the country were starving; and they have ordered them four thousand bushels of millet. This helps, you know, to make bread. And then I needn't say, that if there isn't bread for us, we will eat meat. God has given me wealth, as I told you. Now, then, I'll take you to my master: I've often mentioned you to him, and I know he'll welcome you. He's a Bergamascan of the old sort, and a kind-hearted man. Certainly, he doesn't expect you just now; but let us go."

Everything, in fact, went well, and so exactly in accordance with Bortolo's promises, that it is needless to give any particular description. And it was truly an ordering of Providence; for we shall soon see how little dependence was to be placed upon the small savings Renzo had left at home.

CHAPTER XVIII

COUNT ATTILIO LENDS ASSISTANCE

THAT same day, the 13th of November, an express arrived to the Signor Podestà of Lecco, and presented him with a despatch from the Signor the high sheriff, containing an order to make every possible strict investigation to ascertain whether

a certain young man, bearing the name of Lorenzo Tramaglino, silk-weaver, who had escaped from the hands of the law, had returned to his own country village; in which case the Signor Podestà must endeavor to get him into his hands, and, having sufficiently secured him with strong handcuffs, must cause him to be conducted to prison, and there detained under strong custody, until he be consigned to the officer, who should be sent for him.

After humanely assuring himself that the object of inquiry had not returned home, the Signor Podestà summoned the village constable, and under his direction, proceeded, with a large retinue of notaries and bailiffs, to Renzo's house. They forced the locks with due and praiseworthy zeal, which is equivalent to saying that they proceeded as if taking a city by assault. The report of this expedition immediately spread in the neighborhood, and reached the ears of Father Cristoforo, who, no less astonished than grieved, sought for some information as to the cause of so unexpected an event, from everybody he met with; he could only, however, gather airy conjectures and contradictory reports: and, at last, therefore, wrote to Father Bonaventura, from whom he imagined he should be able to acquire some more precise information.

In the mean while, Renzo's relatives and friends were summoned to depose all they knew about his *depraved habits:* to bear the name of Tramaglino became a misfortune, a disgrace, a crime; and the village was quite in a commotion. By degrees, it became known that Renzo had escaped from the hands of justice during the disturbance at Milan, and had not since been seen. It was whispered about that he had been guilty of some high crime and misdemeanor, but what it was no one could tell, or they told it in a hundred different ways.

But we, who have the facts in our possession, can affirm that, if Don Rodrigo had had no share in Renzo's mis-

fortunes, he rejoiced in them as if they had been his own work, and triumphed over them among his confidants, especially with Count Attilio. This friend, according to his first intention, should have been, by this time, at Milan; but, on the first announcement of the disturbances that had arisen there, and of the rabble whom he might encounter in a far different mood than tamely to submit to a beating, he thought it expedient to postpone his journey until he received better accounts. The journey was not long delayed; the order despatched from Milan for the execution against Renzo had already given some indication that things had returned to their ordinary course, and the positive notices which followed quick upon it, confirmed the truth of these appearances. Count Attilio set off immediately, enjoining his cousin to persist in his undertaking and bring it to an issue, and promising, on his part, that he would use every means to rid him of the friar, to whom the fortunate accident of his cousin's beggarly rival would be a wonderful blow. Hardly had Attilio gone, when Griso arrived from Monza, and related to his master what he had been able to gather; that Lucia had found refuge in such a monastery, under the protection of the Signora So-and-so; that she was concealed there as if she were a nun herself, never setting foot outside the threshold, and assisting at the services of the church behind a little grated window.

This account inspired Don Rodrigo with every evil passion, or, to speak more truly, rendered still more ungovernable those with which he was already possessed. So many circumstances favorable to his design had only further inflamed that mixture of punctilio, rage and infamous desire of which his passion was composed. Renzo absent, banished, outlawed—so that any proceedings against him became lawful; and even that his betrothed bride might be considered, in a measure, as the property of a rebel: the only man in the world who

would and could interest himself in her, and make a stir that would be noticed in headquarters, and at a distance —the enraged friar—would himself, probably, be soon incapable of acting for her. Yet here was a new impediment, which not only outweighed all these advantages, but rendered them, it might be said, unavailing. A monastery at Monza, even had there not been a princess in the way, was a bone too hard even for the teeth of a Rodrigo; and wander in his fancy round this retreat as he would, he could devise no way or means of assaulting it, either by force or fraud. He was almost resolved to give up the enterprise, to go to Milan by a circuitous route, so as to avoid passing through Monza, and there to plunge himself into the society of his friends, and their recreations, so as to drown, in thoughts of gaiety, the one idea which had now become so tormenting.

In this perplexity, unwilling either to give up his purpose, to go back, or to stop, and unable by himself to go forward, a plan occurred to Don Rodrigo's mind, by which he hoped to effect his design. That was to take, as a partner and assistant in his enterprise, one whose hands could often reach beyond the views of others—at once a man and a devil, to whom the difficulty of an undertaking was frequently an incentive to engage in it. But this course also had its inconveniences and its dangers; the more pressing, the less they could be calculated upon beforehand; since it was impossible to foresee where one might be led, when once embarked in an affair with this man: a powerful auxiliary, certainly, but a not less absolute and dangerous guide.

These thoughts kept Don Rodrigo for several days in a state of worse than tedious perplexity. In the meanwhile, a letter arrived from his cousin, informing him that the plot against the friar was going on very well. One fine morning, Don Rodrigo heard that Father Cristoforo had left the convent at Pescarenico. This success,

so prompt, and so complete, together with Attilio's letter, encouraging him onward, and threatening him with intolerable ridicule if he withdrew, inclined Don Rodrigo still more to hazard everything rather than give up; but that which finally decided him, was the unexpected news that Agnese had returned home, thus removing one obstacle from Lucia. We will relate how these two circumstances were brought about, beginning with the last.

The two unfortunate women were hardly settled in their retreat, when the report of the disturbances in Milan spread rapidly over Monza. The portress, situated just between the street and the monastery, was the channel of information both from within and from without, and, eagerly receiving these reports, retailed them at will to her guests. "Two, six, eight, four, seven, had been imprisoned; they would hang them, some before the bakehouse of the Crutches, some at the end of the street where the Superintendent of provisions lived. One of them escaped—a man somewhere from Lecco, or thereabouts. I don't know the name; but some one will be passing who will be able to tell me, to see if you know him."

This announcement, together with the circumstance that Renzo would just have arrived at Milan on the fatal day, occasioned a good deal of disquietude to the women, and especially to Lucia; but what must it have been, when the portress came to tell them—"It is a man from your very village who has escaped being hanged—a silk-weaver, named Tramaglino; do you know him?"

Lucia, who was sitting hemming some needlework, immediately let it fall from her hands; she became extremely pale, and changed countenance so much that the portress would certainly have observed it had she been nearer to her. Fortunately, however, she was standing at the door with Agnese, who, though much disturbed, yet not to such a degree as her daughter, preserved a

calm countenance, and forced herself to reply that in a little village everybody knew everybody; that she was acquainted with him, and could not bring herself to believe that anything of the kind had happened to him, he was so peaceable a youth. She then asked whether it was known for certain that he had escaped and whither.

"Everyone says he has escaped, where to, they cannot say; it may be they will catch him again, or it may be he is in safety; but if they do get hold of him, your peaceable youth"—

Fortunately, at this juncture, the portress was called away. For more than a day were the poor woman and her afflicted daughter obliged to remain in this painful suspense, imagining the causes, ways, and consequences, of this unhappy event, and commenting, in their own minds, or in a low voice with each other, on the terrible words their informer had left unfinished.

At length, one Thursday, a man arrived at the monastery in search of Agnese. He was a fishmonger, of Pescarenico, going to Milan, as usual, to dispose of his fish; and the good Father Cristoforo had requested him, in passing through Monza, to call in at the monastery, to greet the women in his name, to tell them all he knew about this sad affair of Renzo's, to beseech them to have patience, and put their trust in God; and to assure them that he would certainly not forget them, but would watch his opportunity for rendering them assistance; and, in the mean time, would not fail to send them all the news he could collect every week, either by this means or a similar one. The messenger could tell nothing new or certain about Renzo, except that it was known for certain he had reached the territory of Bergamo. Such a certainty, it is unnecessary to say, was a balm to poor Lucia's wounded heart.

The second Thursday another messenger arrived, bringing salutations and encouragement from Father

Cristoforo, and an additional confirmation of Renzo's escape; but no more positive information about his misfortunes. The reader may remember that the Capuchin had hoped for some account from his brother-friar at Milan, to whom he had given Renzo a letter of recommendation; he only replied, however, that he had seen neither letter nor person: that a stranger from the country had certainly been to the convent in search of him, but finding him absent, had gone away, and had not again made his appearance.

The third Thursday no messenger came; which was not only depriving the poor women of an anticipated and hoped-for source of consolation; but, as it usually happens of every trifling occasion to those in sorrow and suspense, was also a subject of much disquietude, and a hundred tormenting suspicions. Agnese had, for some time, been contemplating a visit to her native village, and this unexpected non-appearance of the promised messenger determined her upon taking such a step. Lucia felt very strange at the thought of being left without the shelter of her mother's wing; but the longing desire she felt to know something, and her sense of security in that guarded and sacred asylum, conquered her great unwillingness. Agnese then made her request, which being granted without hesitation, she took leave of the Signora and her daughter with many tears; and, promising to send them some news soon and to return as quickly as possible, she set off.

The journey was performed without accident. Agnese passed part of the night in an inn on the roadside, and setting off on her way before sunrise, arrived early in the morning at Pescarenico. She rang the bell of the convent; the person who came to open the door was Fra Galdino, the nut-seeker.

"Oh, my good woman, what wind has brought you here?"

"I wish to see the good Father Cristoforo, at once."

"Father Cristoforo? He's not here."

"Oh, will it be long before he comes back?"

"Long!" said the friar, shrugging his shoulders, so as almost to bury his shorn head in his hood.

"Where has he gone?"

"To Rimini."

"Where is that?"

"Eh! eh! eh!" replied the friar, vertically waving his extended hand in the air, to signify a great distance.

"Alas! But why has he gone away so suddenly?"

"Because the Father-provincial ordered it."

"And why have they sent him away at all, when he was doing so much good here? Ah, poor me!"

"If superiors were obliged to render a reason for all the orders they give, where would be our obedience, my good woman?"

"Yes; but this is my ruin."

"This is the way it must be. They will have wanted a good preacher at Rimini (there are some everywhere, to be sure, but sometimes they want a particular man, on purpose); the Father-provincial there probably wrote to the Father-provincial here, to know if he had such and such a person; and the Father-provincial said 'Father Cristoforo is the man for him;' as, in fact, you see he is."

"Oh, poor us! When did he go?"

"The day before yesterday."

"See now; if I had only done as I first wished and come a few days sooner! And don't you know when he may return? Can't you guess at all?"

"Eh, my good woman! Nobody knows, except the Father-provincial, if even he does."

"Oh, dear, dear!" again cried Agnese, almost weeping; "what can I do without him? He is like a father to us! It is the undoing of us."

"Listen, my good woman. Father Cristoforo was cer-

tainly an admirable man; but we have others, you know, full of charity and ability, who know how to deal with either rich or poor. Will you have Father Atanasio? or Father Girolamo? or Father Zaccaria? Father Zaccaria, you know, is a man of great worth. And don't wonder, as some ignorant people do, that he is so thin, and has such a weak voice, and such a miserable beard: I don't say that he is a good preacher, because everybody has his particular gifts; but he is just the man to give advice, you know."

"Oh, holy patience!" exclaimed Agnese, with that mingling of gratitude and impatience that one feels at an offer in which there is more good nature than suitableness; "what does it matter to me what a man is or is not, when that good man who's no longer here was he who knew all our affairs, and had made preparations to help us?"

"Then you must have patience."

"I know that," replied Agnese; "forgive me for troubling you."

"Oh don't say a word, my good woman; I am very sorry for you. And if you determine upon consulting any of the Fathers, the convent is here, and won't go away. I shall see you soon, when I collect the oil."

"Good-by," said Agnese; and she turned toward her little village, forlorn, perplexed, and disconcerted, like a blind man who has lost his staff.

We will now relate how things had really happened. Immediately on Attilio's arrival at Milan, he went, as he had promised Don Rodrigo, to pay a visit to their common uncle of the Privy-council. Their uncle, the Count, a robed member, and one of the oldest of the Council, enjoyed there a certain authority; but in displaying this authority, and making it felt by those around him, there was not his equal.

After paying all due ceremony to his uncle, and deliv-

ering his cousin's compliments, Attilio addressed him with a look of seriousness, such as he knew how and when to assume: "I think I am only doing my duty without betraying Rodrigo's confidence, when I acquaint my uncle with an affair, which, unless you interfere, may become serious, and produce consequences"—

"One of his usual scrapes, I suppose?"

"I can assure you that the fault is not on Rodrigo's side, but his spirit is roused; and, as I said, no one but you can"—

"Well, let us hear, let us hear."

"There is a Capuchin friar in that neighborhood, who bears a grudge against my cousin; and things have gone to such a pitch that"—

"How often have I told you both to let the monks fry their own fish? It is quite sufficient for those to have to do with them who are obliged to," and here he sighed. "But you can avoid them."

"Signor uncle, I am bound to tell you that Rodrigo would have let them alone, had it been possible. It is the friar who is determined to quarrel with him, and has tried in every way to provoke him."

"What the devil has this friar to do with my nephew?"

"First of all, he is well known as a restless spirit, who prides himself upon quarreling with gentlemen. This fellow, too, has taken under his protection and direction, and I don't know what besides, a country girl of the village whom he regards with an affection—I don't say of what kind—but a very jealous, suspicious affection."

"I understand," said the Count, and a ray of cunning intelligence shot across the depth of dulness nature had stamped upon his countenance, now, however, partially veiled under the mask of a politician.

"Now, for some time," continued Attilio, "this friar has taken a fancy that Rodrigo has I don't know what designs upon this"—

"Taken a fancy, eh, taken a fancy? I know the Signor Don Rodrigo too well; and it needs another advocate besides your lordship to justify him in these matters."

"That Rodrigo, Signor uncle, may have had some idle jesting with this girl, when he met her on the road, I can easily believe: he is young, and besides, not a Capuchin: but these are mere trivialities, not worth mentioning to my noble uncle: the serious part of the business is, that the friar has begun to talk of Rodrigo as he would of a common fellow, and has tried to instigate all the country against him."

"And the other friars?"

"They don't meddle with it, because they know him to be a hot-headed fool, and bear a great respect to Rodrigo; but, on the other side, this monk has great reputation among the villagers as a saint, and"—

"I fancy he doesn't know Rodrigo is my nephew."

"Doesn't he, though? It is just this that urges him onward."

"How? how?"

"Because—and he scruples not to publish it—he takes greater delight in vexing Rodrigo exactly because he has a natural protector of such authority as your lordship; he laughs at great people and politicians, and says that the cord of Saint Francis binds even to swords and"—

"The rash villain! What is his name?"

"Fra Cristoforo, of ———," said Attilio; and his uncle, taking a tablet from his desk, and considerably incensed, inscribed within it the unfortunate name. In the mean while Attilio continued: "This fellow has always had such a disposition: his former life is well known. He was a plebeian who possessed a little money, and would, therefore, compete with the noblemen of his country; and out of rage at not being able to make them all yield to him, he killed one, and then turned friar to escape the gallows."

"Bravo! capital! We shall see!" exclaimed the Count, panting and puffing with an important air.

"Lately," continued Attilio, "he is more enraged than ever, because he has failed in a design which he was very eager about; and from this my noble uncle will understand what sort of person he is. This friar wanted to marry off his protégée; whether to remove her from the perils of the world, you understand, or whatever it might be, at any rate he was determined to marry her; and he had found the man, another of his protégés, a person whose name my honored uncle may not improbably have heard; for I dare say the Privy-council have had some transactions with this worthy subject."

"Who is he?"

"A silk-weaver, Lorenzo Tramaglino, he who"—

"Lorenzo Tramaglino!" exclaimed his uncle. "Well done, my brave friar ! Certainly, he had a letter for a— A crime that—but it matters not—very well. And why did Don Rodrigo tell me nothing of all this; but let things go so far, without applying to one who is both able and willing to direct and help him?"

"I will be candid with you. On the one hand, knowing how many intrigues and affairs you had in your head"— (here his uncle drew a long breath, and put his hand to his forehead, as if to intimate the fatigue he underwent in the settlement of so many intricate undertakings), "he felt in a manner bound," continued Attilio, "not to give you any additional trouble. And besides, I will tell you the whole: from what I can gather, he is so annoyed at the insults offered him by this friar, that he is more desirous of getting justice for himself by summary means than of obtaining it in the regular way of prudence by the assistance of your lordship. I have tried to extinguish the flame; but seeing things taking a wrong course, I thought it my duty to inform your lordship of everything, who, after all, is the head of the house."

"You would have done better to speak a little sooner."

"True; but I continued to hope that the thing would die of itself, or that the friar would, at last, come to his senses, or would, perhaps, leave the convent, as is often the case among the monks, who are one day here and another there; and then all would have been ended."

"Now it is my business to settle it."

"So I have thought. I said to myself: The Signor, my uncle, with his discretion and authority, will know well enough how to prevent a quarrel, and at the same time secure Rodrigo's honor, which is almost, as it were, his own. My noble uncle has many means that I know not of: I only know that the Father-provincial has, as is but right, a great respect for him; and if my honored uncle thought that the best course, in this instance, would be to give the friar change of air; two words"—

"Your lordship will be pleased to leave the arrangement to the person to whom it belongs," said his uncle.

"Oh, certainly!" exclaimed Attilio, with a toss of his head, and a disguised smile of disdainful compassion. "I am not intending to give advice to your lordship! But the regard I have for our reputation made me speak."

Attilio made a few more excuses, promises, and compliments, and then took his leave, accompanied by the words: "Be prudent," the Count's usual form of dismissal to his nephews.

CHAPTER XIX

THE PLOT AGAINST FATHER CRISTOFORO

WE are unable to decide whether the resolution formed by the Count of making use of the Father-provincial to cut in two, as the best and easiest method, this intricate knot, arose from his own unassisted imagination or from the sugges-

tions of Attilio. Certain it is, that Attilio had not thrown out the hint unintentionally; and however naturally he might expect that the jealous haughtiness of his noble relative would recoil at so open an insinuation, he was determined at any rate to make the idea of such a resource flash before his eyes, and let him know the course which he desired he should pursue. On the other hand, the plan was so exactly consonant with his uncle's disposition, and so naturally marked out by circumstances, that one might safely venture the assertion that he had thought of, and embraced it, without the suggestion of anyone.

Commands, legal force, or terrors of that nature, were of no value against an adversary of such a character as Father Cristoforo: the regular and secular clergy were entirely exempt, not only in their persons, but in their places of abode, from all lay jurisdiction; otherwise they would often have fared very badly. All that could be attempted against such a rival was his removal, and the only means for obtaining this was the Father-provincial, at whose pleasure Father Cristoforo was stationary, or on the move.

Between this Father-provincial and the Count of the Privy-council existed an acquaintanceship of long standing: they seldom saw each other, but whenever they met, it was with great demonstrations of friendship, and reiterated offers of service.

When all this had been arranged in his mind, the Count one day invited the Father-provincial to dinner, to meet a circle of guests selected with superlative judgment.

At the table, the noble host quickly turned the conversation upon Madrid. There are many ways and means of accomplishing one's object, and he tried all. At a certain point he gave a turn to the conversation, and, leaving Madrid, proceeded from court to court, and from dignitary to dignitary, till he had brought upon the tapis

Cardinal Barberini, a Capuchin, and brother to the then reigning Pope, Urban VIII. Shortly after leaving the table, he requested the Father-provincial to step with him into another apartment.

Two men of authority, age, and consummate experience now found themselves standing opposite to each other. The noble lord requested the reverend Father to take a seat, and placing himself at his side, began as follows: "Considering the friendship that exists between us, I thought I might venture to speak a word to your Reverence on a matter of common interest, which it would be better to settle between ourselves, without taking any other courses. But, without further preface, I will candidly tell you to what I allude, and I doubt not you will immediately agree with me. Tell me: in your convent of Pescarencio there is a Father Cristoforo of ———?"

The Father-provincial bowed assent.

"Your Paternity will be good enough then, frankly, like a friend, to tell me about this person—this Father. I don't know him personally; I am acquainted with several Capuchin fathers, zealous, prudent, humble men, who are worth their weight in gold: I have been a friend to the order from my boyhood. But in every rather numerous family there is always some individual, some wild fellow. And this Father Cristoforo, I know by several occurrences that he is a person rather inclined to disputes, who has not all prudence, all circumspection. I dare say he has more than once given your Paternity some anxiety."

—I understand; this is a specimen, thought the Father-provincial.—It is my fault; I knew that that blessed Cristoforo was fitter to go about from pulpit to pulpit, than to be set down for six months in one place, especially in a country convent.—

"Oh!" said he aloud, "I am really sorry to hear that your Highness entertains such an opinion of Father Cris-

toforo; for, as far as I know, he is a most exemplary monk in the convent, and is held in much esteem also in the neighborhood."

"I understand perfectly; but, as a sincere friend, I wish to inform you of a thing which it is important for you to know; and even if you are already acquainted with it, I think, without exceeding my duty, I should caution you against the possible consequences. Do you know that this Father Cristoforo has taken under his protection a man of that country, a man of whom your Paternity has doubtless heard mention; him who escaped in such disgrace from the hands of justice, after doing things on that terrible day of Saint Martin—Lorenzo Tramaglino?"

—Alas! thought the Father-provincial, as he replied: "This particular is quite new to me, but your Highness is sufficiently aware that it is part of our office to seek those who have gone astray, to recall them"—

"Yes, yes; but intercourse with offenders of a certain kind!—is rather a dangerous thing—a very delicate affair. I thought it as well to give you this hint, because if ever his Excellency—he may have had some business at Rome, I don't know, though—and there might come to you from Rome"—

"I am much obliged to your Lordship for this information, but I feel confident that if they would make inquiries on this subject they would find that Father Cristoforo has had no intercourse with the person you mention, unless it be to try to set him right again. I know Father Cristoforo well."

"You know, probably, already, better than I do, what kind of a man he was as a layman, and the life he led in his youth."

"It is one of the glories of our habit, Signor Count, that a man who has given ever so much occasion in the world for men to talk about him, becomes a different person

when he has assumed this dress. And ever since Father Cristoforo has worn the habit"—

"I would gladly believe it, I assure you; but sometimes, as the proverb says, 'It is not the cowl that makes the friar.' "

"If you know for certain," interrupted the Father-provincial, "that this friar has been guilty of any fault (and we are all liable to err), you will do me a favor to inform me of it. I am his superior, though unworthily; but it is, therefore, my duty to correct and reprove."

"I will tell you; together with the unpleasing circumstance of the favor this Father displays toward the person I have mentioned, there is another grievous thing. This same Father Cristoforo has begun a quarrel with my nephew, Don Rodrigo ———."

"Indeed ! I am very sorry to hear it!—very sorry indeed!"

"My nephew is young, and hot-tempered; he feels what he is, and is not accustomed to be provoked."

"It shall be my business to make every inquiry on the subject. As I have often told your Lordship, and as you must know, with your great experience in the world, and your noble judgment far better than I, we are all human, and liable to err—some one way, some another; and if our Father Cristoforo has failed"—

"Your Reverence must perceive that these are matters, as I said, which had better be settled between ourselves, and remain buried with us. My nephew is young; the monk, from what I hear, has still all the spirit—all the inclinations of a young man; and it belongs to us who have some years on our shoulders to have judgment for the young, and try to remedy their errors. Fortunately we are still in good time; the matter has made no stir. Let us remove the straw from the flame. A man who has not done well, or who may be a cause of some trouble in one place, sometimes gets on surprisingly in another.

Your Paternity, doubtless, knows where to find a convenient post for this friar. This will also meet the other circumstance of his having, perhaps, fallen under the suspicions of one who would be very glad that he should be removed; and thus, by placing him at a little distance, we shall kill two birds with one stone; all will be quietly settled, or rather, there will be no harm done."

The Father-provincial had expected this conclusion from the beginning of the interview.—Ay, ay! thought he;—I see well enough what you would bring me to. It's the usual way; if a poor friar has an encounter with you, or with any one of you, or gives you any offense, right or wrong, the Superior must make him march immediately.—

"I understand very well," said the Father-provincial, "what your noble Lordship would say; but before taking a step"—

"It is a step, and it is not a step, most reverend Father. It is a natural thing enough—a very common occurrence; and if it does not come to this, and quickly too, I foresee a mountain of disorders—an Iliad of woes."

"Certainly," said the Father-provincial, "Father Cristoforo is a preacher; and I had already some thoughts—I have just been asked. But at this juncture, and under the present circumstances, it might look like a punishment; and a punishment before having fully ascertained"—

"Pshaw! punishment, pshaw!—merely a prudential arrangement—a convenient resource for preventing evils which might ensue. I have explained myself."

"I have just been asked for a preacher at Rimini; and perhaps, even without any other reason, I should have thought of it."

"Exactly apropos. And when"—

"Since the thing must be done, it had better be done at once."

"Directly, directly, most reverend Father; better to-day than to-morrow. And," continued he, as he rose from his seat, "if I can do anything, I or my friends, for our worthy Capuchin Fathers"—

"We know by experience, the kindness of your house," said the Father-provincial, also rising, and advancing toward the door, behind his vanquisher.

One evening, a Capuchin arrived at Pescarenico, from Milan, with a despatch to the Father-guardian. It contained an order for Father Cristoforo to repair at once to Rimini, where he was appointed to preach the course of Lent Sermons. The letter to the guardian contained instructions to insinuate to the said friar, that he must give up all thoughts of any business he might have in hand in the neighborhood he was about to leave, and was not to keep up any correspondence there: the bearer would be his companion by the way. The guardian said nothing that evening; but next morning he summoned Father Cristoforo, showed him the command, bade him take his wallet, staff, maniple, and girdle, and, with the Father whom he presented to him as a companion, immediately set off on his journey.

What a blow this would be to the poor friar, the reader must imagine. Renzo, Lucia, Agnese, instantly rushed to his mind; and he exclaimed to himself: "Oh, my God! what will these poor creatures do, when I am no longer here!" But instantly raising his eyes to heaven, he reproached himself for want of faith, and for having supposed that he was necessary in anything. He crossed his hands on his breast, in token of obedience, and bowed his head before the guardian, who, taking him aside, told him the rest of the message, adding a few words of advice, and some sensible precepts. Father Cristoforo then went into his cell, took his basket, and placed therein his breviary, his sermons, and the bread of forgiveness, bound round his waist a leathern girdle, took

leave of his brethren, went to request the guardian's blessing, and then, with his companion, took the route prescribed for him.

We have said that Don Rodrigo, more than ever resolved to accomplish his praiseworthy undertaking, had determined to seek the assistance of a very formidable character. Of this personage we can give neither the name, surname, nor title, nor can we even venture a conjecture on any one of them; which is the more remarkable, as we find mention of him in more than one published book of those times. That it is the same personage, the identity of facts leaves no room for doubt; but everywhere a studious endeavor may be traced to conceal his name, as if the mention of it would have ignited the pen, and scorched the writer's hand. Francesco Rivola, in his Life of the Cardinal Federigo Borromeo, speaking of this person, says, "A nobleman, as powerful by wealth as illustrious by birth," and nothing more. Guiseppe Ripamonti, who, in the fifth book of the fifth decade of his Storia Patria, makes more exclusive mention of him, describes him as "one," "this person," "that person," "this man," "that personage." "I will relate," says he, in his elegant Latin, which we translate as follows—"the case of one, who, being among the first of the great men of the city, took up his residence in the country; where, securing himself by the force of crime, he set at naught justice and judges, all magisterial, and even all sovereign power. Situated on the very confines of the state, he led an independent life; a harborer of outlaws, an outlaw at one time himself, and then safely returned."

To do what was forbidden by the public laws, or rendered difficult by an opposing power; to be the arbiter, the judge in other people's affairs, without further interest in them than the love of command; to be feared by all, and to have the upper hand among those who were

accustomed to hold the same station over others: such had ever been the principal objects and desires of this man. From his youth he had always had a mingled feeling of contempt and impatient envy at the sight or report of the power, rencounters, strifes, or oppressive tyranny of others. Young, and living in a city, he omitted no opportunity, nay, even sought for one, of setting himself up against the most renowned of this profession, either entirely to subdue them, to struggle with them, and keep them in awe, or to induce them to solicit his friendship. Superior to most in riches and retinue, and, perhaps, to all in presumption and intrepidity, he compelled many to retire from competition; some he treated with haughtiness or contempt, some he took as friends; not, however, on an equality with himself, but, as alone would satisfy his proud and arrogant mind, as subordinate friends, who would be content to acknowledge their inferiority, and use their hands in his service. He went on thus, till, on his own service and that of others, he had gone to such a length that neither his name, family, friends, nor even his own audacity, sufficed to secure him against public proclamations and outlawry, and he was compelled to give way and leave the state.

During his absence he continued the same practices, not even intermitting his correspondence with those of his friends who remained united to him.

At length, either the sentence of banishment against him being withdrawn, by some powerful intercession, or the audacity of the man serving him in place of any other liberation, he resolved to return home and, in fact, *did* return, not, however, to Milan, but to a castle on his manor, situated on the confines of the Bergamascan territory, at that time, as most of our readers know, under Venetian government; and here he fixed his abode. "This dwelling," we again quote Ripamonti, "was, as it were,

a dispensary of sanguinary mandates: the servants were outlaws and murderers; the very cooks and scullions were not exempt from homicide; the hands of the children were stained with blood."

All the tyrannical noblemen for a considerable distance round had been obliged, on one occasion or another, to choose between the friendship and the enmity of this supereminent tyrant. Those, however, who at first attempted to resist him, came off so badly in the contest that no one was ever induced to make a second trial.

The distance between his castle and the palace of Don Rodrigo was not more than seven miles; and no sooner had the latter become a lord and tyrant than he could not help seeing that, at so short a distance from such a personage, it would not be possible to carry on this profession without either coming to blows, or walking hand in hand with him. He had, therefore, offered himself and been accepted for a friend, in the same way, that is, as the rest: he had rendered him more than one service (the manuscript says nothing further); and had each time been rewarded by promises of requital and assistance in any cases of emergency. He took great pains, however, to conceal such a friendship, or at least of what nature and how strict it was. An intimacy, or it would be better to say an alliance, with a person of such notoriety, an open enemy of the public power, would certainly not have advanced his interests in these respects, and particularly with his uncle. But the slight acquaintance which he was unable to conceal might pass very well for an indispensable attention toward a man whose enmity was much to be deprecated, and thus it might receive excuse from necessity.

One morning, Don Rodrigo set off on horseback, in the guise of a hunter, with a small escort of bravoes on foot, Griso at his side, and four others following him, and took the road to the castle of the Unnamed.

CHAPTER XX

THE UNNAMED

THE castle of the Unnamed was commandingly situated over a dark and narrow valley, on the summit of a cliff projecting from a rugged ridge of hills, united to them by a mass of crags and rocks, and by a boundary of caverns and abrupt precipices, both flanking it and on the rear. The side that overlooked the valley was the only accessible one; rather a steep acclivity, certainly, but even and unbroken.

From the height of this castle, like an eagle from his sanguinary nest, the savage nobleman surveyed every spot around where the foot of man could tread, and heard no human sound above him. At one view he could overlook the whole vale, the declivities, the bed of the stream, and the practicable paths intersecting the valley. That which approached his terrible abode by a zigzag and serpentine course, appeared to a spectator from below like a winding thread; while from the windows and loopholes on the summit, the Signor could leisurely observe any one who was ascending, and a hundred times catch a view of him.

At the sound of a party approaching on horseback, an ill-looking lad appeared at the doorway, well armed with knives and pistols, and, after giving a glance at them, reëntered to inform three ruffians, who, seated at table, were playing with a very dirty pack of cards, reversed and laid one upon another like so many tiles. He who seemed to be the leader rose, and advancing toward the door, recognized a friend of his master and saluted him with a bow. Don Rodrigo, returning the salutation with politeness, inquired whether his master were in the castle, and receiving for an answer that he believed so, dis-

mounted from his horse, throwing the reins to Tiradritto, one of his retinue. Then taking his musket from his shoulder, he handed it to Montanarolo, as if to relieve himself of a useless weight, and render his ascent easier; but in reality, because he knew well enough that no one was permitted to mount that steep who carried a gun.

On reaching the castle, and being admitted (having left Griso outside), Don Rodrigo was conducted a roundabout way through dark corridors, and various apartments hung with muskets, sabers, and partisans, in each of which a bravo stood on guard; and after waiting some time he was at last admitted into the room where the Unnamed was expecting him.

The Signor advanced to meet Don Rodrigo, returning his salutation, and at the same time eyeing him from head to foot with the closest scrutiny, according to his usual habit, now almost an involuntary one, toward any one who approached him, even toward his oldest and most tried friends.

Don Rodrigo told him that he came to solicit his advice and assistance; that, finding himself engaged in a difficult undertaking, from which his honor would not now suffer him to retire, he had called to mind the promises of his noble friend, who never promised too much, or in vain; and he then proceeded to relate his infamous enterprise. The Unnamed, who had already had some indefinite knowledge of the affair, listened attentively to the recital, both because he was naturally fond of such stories, and because there was implicated in it a name well known and exceedingly odious to him, that of Father Cristoforo, the open enemy of tyrants, not only in word, but, when possible, in deed also. The narrator then proceeded to exaggerate, in evidence, the difficulties of the undertaking:—the distance of the place, a monastery, the Signora! At this word, the Unnamed, as if a demon hidden in his heart had suggested it, abruptly interrupted him,

saying that he would take the enterprise upon himself. He took down the name of our poor Lucia, and dismissed Don Rodrigo with the promise: "You shall shortly hear from me what you are to do."

If the reader remembers that infamous Egidio whose residence adjoined the monastery where poor Lucia had found a retreat, we will now inform him that he was one of the nearest and most intimate associates in iniquity of the Unnamed; and it was for this reason that the latter had so abruptly and resolutely taken upon him to pledge his word. Nevertheless, he was no sooner left alone, than he began to feel, I will not say repentance, but vexation at having made the promise. For some time past he had experienced, not exactly remorse, but a kind of weariness of his wicked course of life. These feelings, which had accumulated rather in his memory than on his conscience, were renewed each time any new crime was committed and each time they seemed more multiplied and intolerable: it was like constantly adding and adding to an already incommodious weight. A certain repugnance experienced on the commission of his earlier crimes, afterward overcome and almost entirely excluded, again returned to make itself felt. But in his first misgivings, the image of a distant and uncertain future, together with the consciousness of a vigorous habit of body and a strong constitution, had only confirmed him in a supine and presumptuous confidence. Now, on the contrary, it was the thoughts of the future that embittered the retrospect of the past. To grow old! To die! And then? It is worthy of notice, that the image of death, which in present danger, when facing an enemy, usually only nerved his spirit, and inspired him with impetuous courage—this same image, when presented to his mind in the solemn stillness of night, and in the security of his own castle, was always accompanied with a feeling of undefined horror and alarm. That God, of

whom he had once heard, but whom he had long ceased either to deny or acknowledge, solely occupied as he was in acting as if He existed not, now, at certain moments of depression without cause, and terror without danger, he imagined he heard repeating within him, "Nevertheless, I am."

On this occasion, therefore, he had hastily pledged his word to Don Rodrigo, that he might close the door against all hesitation. Feeling, however, on his visitor's departure, a failing of the resolution that he had summoned up to make the promise, and gradually overwhelmed with thoughts presenting themselves to his mind, which tempted him to break his word, and which, if yielded to, would have made him sink very low in the eyes of his friend, a secondary accomplice, he resolved at once to cut short the painful conflict, and summoned Nibbio to his presence, one of the most dextrous and venturesome ministers of his enormities, and the one whom he was accustomed to employ in his correspondence with Egidio. With a resolute countenance he ordered him immediately to mount his horse, to go straight to Monzo, to inform Egidio of the engagement he had made, and to request his counsel and assistance in fulfilling it.

The rascally messenger returned more expeditiously than his master expected, with Egidio's reply, that the undertaking was easy and secure: if the Unnamed would send a carriage which would not be known as his, with two or three well-disguised bravoes, Egidio would undertake the charge of all the rest, and would manage the whole affair. At this announcement, the Unnamed, whatever might be passing in his mind, hastily gave orders to Nibbio to arrange all as Egidio required, and to go himself, with two others whom he named, upon this expedition.

Had Egidio been obliged to reckon only on ordinary

means for the accomplishment of the horrible service he had been requested to undertake, he certainly would not thus readily have given so unhesitating a promise. But in that very asylum, where it would seem all ought to have been an obstacle, the atrocious villain had a resource known only to himself; and that which would have been the greatest difficulty to others became an instrument to him. We have already related how the unhappy Signora on one occasion lent an ear to his addresses; and the reader may have understood that this was not the last time—that it was but the first step in a career of abomination and bloodshed. The same voice, rendered imperative and almost authoritative through guilt, now imposed upon her the sacrifice of the innocent creature who had been committed to her care.

The proposal was frightful to Gertrude. To lose Lucia by an unforeseen accident, and without any fault on her part, would have seemed to her a misfortune, a bitter punishment: but now she was enjoined to deprive herself of her society by a base act of perfidy, and to convert a means of expiation into a fresh subject for remorse. The unhappy lady tried every method to extricate herself from the horrible command;—every method, except the only one which would have been infallible, and which still remained in her power. Guilt is a rigid and inflexible tyrant, against whom all are powerless but those who entirely rebel. On this Gertrude could not resolve, and she obeyed.

It was the day fixed; the appointed hour approached; Gertrude retired with Lucia into her private apartment, and there lavished upon her more caresses than usual, which Lucia received and returned with increasing affection.

"I want you to do me a great service; one that nobody but you can do. I have plenty of persons ready to obey me, but none whom I dare trust. On some very im-

portant business, which I will tell you about afterward, I want to speak to the Father-guardian of the Capuchins who brought you here to me, my poor Lucia; but it is absolutely necessary that no one should know I have sent for him. I have nobody but you who can secretly carry this message."

Lucia was terrified at such a request; and endeavored to dissuade her by adducing reasons which the Signora ought to have understood and foreseen: without her mother, without an escort, by a solitary road, in an unknown country. But Gertrude pretended to think her excuses very frivolous. In broad daylight—a mere step —a road Lucia had traveled only a few days before, and which could be so described that even a person who had never seen it could not possibly go astray! In short, she said so much, that the poor girl, touched at once with gratitude and shame, suffered the words to escape, "Well, what am I to do?"

"Go to the Convent of the Capuchins; ask for the Father-guardian, and tell him to come to me as quickly as possible; but not to let any one know that he comes at my request."

"But what shall I say to the portress, who has never seen me go out, and will therefore be sure to ask whither I am going?"

"Try to get out without her seeing you; and if you can't manage it, tell her you are going to such a church, where you have vowed to offer up some prayers."

Here was a new difficulty for Lucia—to tell a falsehood; but the Signora again showed herself so vexed by her repulses, and made her so ashamed of herself for interposing a vain scruple in the way of gratitude, that the poor girl, stupefied rather than convinced, and greatly affected by her words, replied: "Very well; I will go. And may God help me!" And she set off, her mind full of apprehension.

She passed the gate of the cloister unobserved, and took the road along the side of the wall, with her eyes bent to the ground; by the help of the directions she had received, and her own recollections, she found the city gate, and went out. Self-possessed, but still pale and trembling, she proceeded along the high-road, and shortly reached the turn to the convent, which she immediately recognized. A few paces further on, she saw a traveling carriage standing, and two travelers looking this and that way, as if uncertain of the road. On drawing nearer, she overheard one of them saying, "Here is a good woman, who will show us the way." In fact, when she had got opposite the carriage, the same person, with a more courteous manner than countenance, turned and addressed her: "My good girl, can you tell us which is the way to Monza?"

"You have taken the wrong direction," replied the poor girl; "Monza is there," and as she turned to point it out with her finger, the other companion (it was Nibbio) seized her unexpectedly round the waist, and lifted her from the ground. Lucia, in great alarm, turned her head round, and uttered a scream; the ruffian pushed her into the carriage; a third, who was seated in the back of it, concealed from view, received her, and forced her, in spite of her struggles and cries, to sit down opposite to him; while another put a handkerchief over her mouth, and stifled her cries. Nibbio now hastily threw himself into the carriage, shut the door, and they set off at a rapid pace.

Who can represent the terror, the anguish of the unfortunate girl, or describe what was passing in her mind? She opened her terrified eyes, from anxiety to ascertain her horrible situation, and quickly closed them again with a sudder of fear at the sight of the dreadful faces that met her view; she writhed her body, but found that she was held down on all sides; she collected all her strength,

and made a desperate effort to push toward the door; but two sinewy arms held her as if she were nailed to the bottom of the carriage, while four other powerful hands supported her there. At every signal she gave of intending to utter a cry, the handkerchief was instantly stuffed into her mouth to smother the sound, while three infernal brutes, with voices more human than they were accustomed to use, continued to repeat: "Be still, be still; don't be afraid, we don't want to do you any harm." After a few moments of agonized struggle, she seemed to become quieter; her arms sank by her side, her head fell backward, she half opened her eyelids, and her eyes became fixed; the horrible faces which surrounded her appeared to mingle and flock before her in one monstrous image; the color fled from her cheek; a cold moisture overspread her face; her consciousness vanished, and she fainted.

"Come, come, courage!" said Nibbio. "Courage, courage!" repeated the two other ruffians; but the prostration of every faculty preserved Lucia, at that moment, from hearing the consolations addressed to her by those horrible voices.

"The devil! she seems to be dead," said one of them.

"Pshaw!" said the other. "It's only a swoon, such as women often fall into. I know well enough that when I've wanted to send another, be it man or woman, into the other world, it has required something more than this."

"Hold your tongues," said Nibbio. "Attend to your own business, and mind nothing else. Take your muskets from under the seat, and keep them in readiness; for there are always some villains hidden in the wood we are entering. When she recovers, take good care you don't frighten her; don't touch her unless I beckon to you; I am enough to manage her. And hold your tongues: leave me to talk to her."

After some time, the unhappy Lucia gradually began to come to her senses, as if awaking from a profound and troubled sleep, and slowly opened her eyes. At first she found it difficult to distinguish the gloomy objects that surrounded her, and collect her scattered thoughts; but she at last succeeded in recalling her fearful situation. She again uttered a cry; but Nibbio held up the handkerchief in his dreaded hand. "Come," said he, in the gentlest tone he could command, "be quiet, and it will be better for you. We don't want to do you any harm; but if you don't hold your tongue, we'll make you."

"Let me go! Who are you? Where are you taking me? Why have you seized me? Let me go, let me go!"

"I tell you, you needn't be afraid: you're not a baby, and you ought to understand that we don't want to do you any harm. Don't you see that we might have murdered you a hundred times, if we had any bad intentions?—so be quiet."

"No, no, let me go on my own business; I don't know you."

"We know you, however."

"O most Holy Virgin! Let me go, for pity's sake! Who are you? Why have you taken me?"

"Because we have been bidden to do so."

"Who? Who? Who can have bidden you?"

"Hush!" said Nibbio, with a stern look; "you mustn't ask me such questions."

Lucia made another attempt to throw herself suddenly out of the window; but finding it in vain, she again had recourse to entreaties; and with her head bent, her cheeks bathed with tears, her voice interrupted by sobs, and her hands clasped before her, "Oh!" cried she, "for the love of God and the most Holy Virgin, let me go! What harm have I done? I am an innocent creature, and have done nobody any harm. I forgive you the wrongs you have done me, from the bottom of my heart, and will

pray God for you. If any of you have a daughter, a wife, a mother, think what they would suffer, if they were in this state. Remember that we must all die, and that you will one day want God to be merciful toward you. Let me go; leave me here; the Lord will teach me to find my way."

"We cannot."

"You cannot! Oh, my God! Why can't you? Where are you taking me? Why?"—

"We cannot; it's no use asking. Don't be afraid, for we won't harm you: be quiet, and nobody'll touch you."

Overcome with distress, agony, and terror at finding that her words made no impression, Lucia turned to Him who holds the hearts of men in His hand, and can, when it pleaseth Him, soften the most obdurate. She prayed fervently, from the bottom of her heart; then drawing out her rosary, she began to repeat the prayer with more faith and devotion than she had ever before done in her life. Then she fell back, and again became senseless, only to awake to new anguish.

She was awaited by the Unnamed with a solicitude and anxiety of mind which were very unusual. Strange! that he who had disposed of so many lives with an imperturbed heart, who in so many undertakings had considered as nothing the sufferings he inflicted, unless it were sometimes to glut his appetite with the fierce enjoyment of revenge, should now feel a recoiling, a regret—I might almost say, a feeling of alarm, at the authority he was exercising over this Lucia—a stranger, a poor peasant-girl! From a lofty window of his castle he had been for some time watching the entrance of the valley; by and by the carriage made its appearance, slowly advancing along the road.

—Will she be there?—thought he immediately; and he continued to say to himself: What trouble this creature gives me! I will free myself from it.—

And he prepared to summon one of his men and despatch him immediately to meet the carriage, with orders to Nibbio to turn round, and conduct her at once to Don Rodrigo's palace. But an imperative *no*, that instantly flashed across his mind, made him at once abandon this design. Tired of idly waiting the approach of the carriage as it advanced slowly, step by step, he summoned an old woman of his household.

This person was the daughter of a former keeper of the castle, had been born within its walls, and spent all her life there. All that she had seen and heard around her from infancy had contributed to impress upon her mind a lofty and terrible idea of the power of her masters; and the principal maxim that she had acquired from instruction and example was that they must be obeyed in everything, because they were capable of doing either great good or great harm. When the Unnamed became her lord, and began to make such terrible use of his power, she felt, from the first, a kind of horror, and, at the same time, a more profound feeling of subjection. In time she became habituated to what she daily saw and heard around her: the potent and unbridled will of such a Signor was, in her idea, a kind of justice appointed by fate. When somewhat advanced in years, she had married a servant of the household, who, being sent on some hazardous expedition, shortly afterward left his bones on the highway, and her a widow in the castle. The vengeance which the Signor quickly took on the instruments of his death yielded her a savage consolation and increased her pride at being under such protection. From that time she rarely set foot outside the castle, and by degrees retained no other ideas of human life than such as she received within its precincts.

"You see that carriage down there?" said the Signor to this amiable specimen of womankind.

"I see it," replied she, protruding her sharp chin, and

staring with her sunken eyes, as if trying to force them out of their sockets.

"Bid them prepare a litter immediately; get into it yourself, and let it be carried to Malanotte instantly, that you may get there before the carriage. In that carriage there is—there should be—a young girl. If she's there, tell Nibbio it is my order that she should be put into the litter, and that he must come directly to me. You will come up in the litter with the girl; and when you are up here, take her into your own room. If she asks you where you are taking her, whom the castle belongs to, take care"—

"Oh," said the old woman.

"But," continued the Unnamed, "try to encourage her."

"What must I say to her?"

"What must you say to her? Try to encourage her, I tell you. Have you come to this age, and don't know how to encourage others when they want it? Have you ever known sorrow of heart? Have you never been afraid? Don't you know what words soothe and comfort at such moments? Say those words to her; find them in the remembrance of your own sorrows. Go directly."

CHAPTER XXI

THE CAGED BIRD

THE old woman immediately hastened to obey. She reached Malanotte shortly before the carriage arrived; and on seeing it approach, got out of the litter, beckoned to the driver to stop, advanced toward the door, and whispered to Nibbio, who put his head out of the window, the wishes of his master.

Lucia aroused herself, on feeling the carriage stop, and awaking from a kind of lethargy, was seized with

renewed terror, as she wildly gazed around her. The old woman, with her chin resting on the door, was looking at Lucia, and saying, "Come, my good girl; come, you poor thing; come with me, for I have orders to treat you well, and try to comfort you."

At the sound of a female voice, the poor girl felt a ray of comfort—a momentary flash of courage; but she quickly relapsed into still more terrible fears. "Who are you?" asked she, in a trembling voice, fixing her astonished gaze on the old woman's face.

"Come, come, you poor creature," was the unvaried answer she received. Nibbio, and his two companions, gathering from the words and the unusually softened tones of the old hag what the intentions of their lord were, endeavored by kind and soothing words to persuade the unhappy girl to obey.

"Who are you?" anxiously demanded Lucia of her unknown and ugly-visaged companion. "Why am I with you? Where am I? Where are you taking me?"

"To one who wishes to do you good," replied the aged dame; "to a great—Happy are they whom he wishes good! You are very lucky, I can tell you. Don't be afraid—be cheerful; he bade me to try to encourage you. You'll tell him, won't you, that I tried to comfort you?"

"Who is he?—why?—what does he want with me? I don't belong to him! Tell me where I am! let me go! bid these people let me go—bid them carry me to some church. Oh! you who are a woman, in the name of Mary the Virgin!"—

This holy and soothing name, once repeated with veneration in her early years, and now for so long a time uninvoked, and, perhaps, unheard, produced in the mind of the unhappy creature, on again reaching her ear, a strange, confused, and distant recollection, like the remembrance of light and form in an aged person that has been blind from infancy.

In the mean while, the Unnamed, standing at the door of his castle, was watching the litter, while it slowly ascended, step by step; Nibbio rapidly advancing before it. When he had at length attained the summit, "Come this way," cried the Signor; and taking the lead, he entered the castle, and went into one of the apartments.

"Well," said he.

"Everything exactly right," replied Nibbio, with a profound obeisance; "the intelligence in time, the girl in time, nobody on the spot, only one scream, nobody attracted by it, the coachman ready, the horses swift, nobody met with: but"—

"But what?"

"But, I will tell the truth; I would rather have been commanded to shoot her in the back, without hearing her speak—without seeing her face."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that all this time I have felt too much compassion for her."

"Compassion! What do you know of compassion? What is compassion?"

"I never understood so well what it was as this time; it is something that rather resembles fear; let it once take possession of you, and you are no longer a man."

"Let me hear a little of what she did to excite your compassion."

"O most noble Signor! such a time weeping, praying, and looking at one with such eyes! and becoming pale as death! and then sobbing, and praying again, and certain words"—

—I won't have this creature in my house, thought the Unnamed, meanwhile. In an evil hour I engaged to do it; but I've promised.—And raising his face with an imperious air toward Nibbio: "Now," said he, "you must lay aside compassion, mount your horse, take a companion—two, if you like—and ride away, till you get to

the palace of this Don Rodrigo, you know. Tell him to send immediately, or else"—

But another internal *no*, more imperative than the first, prohibited his finishing. "No," said he in a resolute tone, almost, as it were, to express to himself the command of this secret voice. "No: go and take some rest; and to-morrow morning you shall do as I will tell you."

—This girl must have some demon of her own, thought he. Some demon, or some angel who protects her. Compassion in Nibbio! To-morrow morning early, she must be off from this; she must go to her place of destination; and she shall not be spoken of again. Compassion in Nibbio! What can this girl have done?—continued he, following out the thought; I must see her. Yet no—yes, I will see her.—

He went from one room to another, came to the foot of a flight of stairs, and irresolutely ascending, proceeded to the old woman's apartment; here he knocked with his foot at the door.

"Who's there?"

"Open the door!"

The old woman made three bounds at the sound of his voice; the bolt was quickly heard grating harshly in the staples, and the door was thrown wide open. The Unnamed cast a glance round the room, as he paused in the doorway; and by the light of a lamp which stood on a three-legged table, discovered Lucia crouched down on the floor, in the corner farthest from the entrance.

"Who bade you throw her there, like a bag of rags, you uncivil old beldame?" said he to the aged matron, with an angry frown.

"She chose it herself," she replied, in a humble tone; "I've done my best to encourage her; she can tell you so herself; but she won't mind me."

"Get up," said he to Lucia, approaching her. But she, whose already terrified mind had experienced a fresh and

mysterious addition to her terror at the knocking, the opening of the door, his footstep, and his voice, only gathered herself still closer into the corner, and, with her face buried in her hands, remained perfectly motionless, except that she trembled from head to foot.

"Get up; I will do you no harm, and I can do you some good," repeated the Signor.

As if invigorated by fear, the unhappy girl instantly raised herself upon her knees, and joining her hands, as she would have knelt before a sacred image, lifted her eyes to the face of the Unnamed, and instantly dropping them, said: "Here I am; kill me if you will."

"I have told you I would do you no harm," replied the Unnamed, in a softened tone, gazing at her agonized features of grief and terror.

"Courage, courage!" said the old woman; "if he himself tells you he will do you no harm"—

"And why," rejoined Lucia, with a voice in which the daring of despairing indignation was mingled with the tremor of fear, "why make me suffer the agonies of hell? What have I done to you?"

"Perhaps they have treated you badly? Tell me."

"Treated me badly! They have seized me by treachery—by force! Why—why have they seized me? Why am I here? Where am I? I am a poor harmless girl. What have I done to you? In the name of God"—

"God, God!" interrupted the Unnamed, "always God! They who can not defend themselves—who have not the strength to do it—must always bring forward this God, as if they had spoken to him. What do you expect by this word?"

"O Signor, expect! What can a poor girl like me expect, except that you should have mercy upon me? God pardons so many sins for one deed of mercy. Let me go; for charity's sake, let me go. It will do no good to one who must die, to make a poor creature suffer thus.

Oh! you can give the command, bid them let me go! Bid them send me again with this woman, and take me where my mother is. Oh! most Holy Virgin! My mother! my mother!—for pity's sake, my mother. Perhaps she is not far from here. I saw my mountains. Why do you give me all this suffering? Bid them take me to a church; I will pray for you all my life. What will it cost you to say one word? Oh, see! you are moved to pity; say one word, oh, say it! God pardons so many sins for one deed of mercy!"

—Why isn't she the daughter of one of the rascally dogs that outlawed me?—thought the Unnamed;—of one of the villains who wish me dead; then I should enjoy her sufferings; but instead—

"Come, take courage," said the Unnamed to Lucia, with a gentleness that astonished the old woman. "Have I done you any harm? Have I threatened you?"

"Oh, no! I see that you have a kind heart, and feel some pity for an unhappy creature. If you chose, you could terrify me more than all the others: you could kill me with fear; but instead of that, you have rather lightened my heart; God will reward you for it. Finish your deed of mercy: set me free."

"To-morrow morning"—

"Oh, set me free now—now."

"To-morrow morning I will see you again, I say. Come, in the meanwhile, be of good courage. Take a little rest; you must want something to eat. They shall bring you something directly."

"No, no; I shall die, if anybody comes here; I shall die! Take me to a church. God will reward you for that.

"A woman shall bring you something to eat," said the Unnamed; and having said so, he stood wondering at himself how such a remedy had entered his mind, and how the wish had arisen to seek a remedy for the sorrows of a poor humble villager.

"And you," he resumed hastily, turning to the aged matron, "persuade her to eat something, and let her lie down to rest on this bed; and if she is willing to have you as a companion, well; if not, you can sleep well enough for one night on the floor. Encourage her, I say, and keep her cheerful. Beware that she has no cause to complain of you."

So saying, he moved quickly toward the door. Lucia sprang up, and ran to detain him and renew her entreaties; but he was gone.

"Oh, poor me! Shut the door quickly." And having heard the door closed, and the bolt again drawn, she returned to seat herself in her corner. "Oh, poor me!" repeated she, sobbing; "whom shall I implore now? Where am I? Do you tell me—tell me, for pity's sake, who is this Signor—he who has been speaking to me?"

"Who is he, eh?—who is he? Do you think I may tell you? Wait till he tells you himself. You are proud, because he protects you; and you want to be satisfied and make me your go-between. Ask him himself. If I were to tell you this, I shouldn't get the good words he has just given you. I am an old woman, an old woman," she continued, muttering between her teeth. "Hang these young folks, who may make a fine show of either laughing or crying, just as they like, and yet are always in the right." But hearing Lucia's sobs, and remembering the threatening commands of her master, she stooped toward the poor crouching girl, and, in a gentler and more humane tone, resumed: "Come, I have said no harm to you; be cheerful. Don't ask me questions which I have no business to answer; but pluck up heart, my good girl. Ah! if you knew how many people would be glad to hear him speak as he has spoken to you! Be cheerful, for he will send you something to eat just now; and I know by the way he spoke it will be

something good. And then you will lie down, and—you will leave just a little corner for me," she added.

"I don't want to eat, I don't want to sleep. Let me alone; don't come near me; but you won't leave the room?"

"No, no, not I," said the old woman, drawing back, and seating herself on an old armchair, whence she cast sundry glances of alarm, and at the same time of envy, toward the poor girl. Then she looked at the bed, vexed at the idea of being, perhaps, excluded from it for the whole night, and grumbling at the cold. But she comforted herself with the thoughts of supper, and with the hope that there might be some to spare for her. Lucia was sensible of neither cold nor hunger, and, almost as if deprived of her senses, had but a confused idea of her very grief and terror, like the undefined objects seen by a delirious patient.

Lucia remained motionless, shrunk up into the corner, her knees drawn close to her breast, her hands resting on her knees, and her face buried in her hands. She was neither asleep nor awake, but worn out with a rapid succession—a tumultuous alternation of thoughts, anticipations, and heart-throbbings.

But suddenly awaking, as at an inward call, she tried to rouse herself completely to regain her scattered senses, and to remember where she was, and how and why. She listened to some sound that caught her ear; it was the slow, deep breathing of the old woman. When fully aroused, the unhappy girl recognized her prison; all the recollections of the horrible day that was fled, all the uncertain terrors of the future, rushed at once upon her mind: the very calm in which she now found herself after so much agitation, the sort of repose she had just tasted, the desertion in which she was left, all combined to inspire her with new dread, till, overcome by alarm, she earnestly longed for death. But at this juncture, she

remembered that she could still pray; and with that thought there seemed to shine forth a sudden ray of comfort. She once more took out her rosary, and began to repeat the prayers; and in proportion as the words fell from her trembling lips, she felt an indefinite confiding faith taking possession of her heart. Suddenly another thought rushed into her mind, that her prayer might, perhaps, be more readily accepted, and more certainly heard, if she were to make some offering in her desolate condition. She tried to remember what she most prized, or, rather, what she had once most prized; for at this moment her heart could feel no other affection than that of fear, nor conceive any other desire than that of deliverance. She did remember it, and resolved at once to make the sacrifice. Rising upon her knees, and clasping her hands, from whence the rosary was suspended before her breast, she raised her face and eyes to heaven, and said: "O most holy Virgin! thou to whom I have so often recommended myself, and who hast so often comforted me!—thou who hast borne so many sorrows, and art now so glorious!—thou who hast wrought so many miracles for the poor and afflicted, help me! Bring me out of this danger; bring me safely to my mother, O Mother of our Lord; and I vow unto thee to continue a virgin! I renounce for ever my unfortunate betrothed, that henceforth I may belong only to thee!"

Having uttered these words, she bowed her head, and placed the beads around her neck, almost as a token of her consecration. Seating herself again on the floor, a kind of tranquillity, a more childlike reliance, gradually diffused themselves over her soul. The *to-morrow morning*, repeated by the unknown nobleman, came to her mind, and seemed to her ear to convey a promise of deliverance.

But in this same castle there was one who would willingly have followed her example, yet who tried in vain.

After departing, or rather escaping, from Lucia, giving orders for her supper, and paying his customary visits to several posts in his castle, the nobleman had hastily retired to his chamber, impetuously shut the door and had lain down. But that image, which now more closely than ever haunted his mind, seemed at that moment to say: "Thou shalt not sleep!"—What absurd, womanlike, curiosity tempted me to see her?—thought he.—That fool of a Nibbio was right: I am no longer a man, I! Am I no longer a man? What has happened? What devil has got possession of me? What is there new in all this? Didn't I know, before now, that women always weep and implore? Even men do sometimes, when they have not the power to rebel. What the devil! have I never heard women cry before?—

And here, without giving himself much trouble to task his memory, it suggested to him, of its own accord, more than one instance in which neither entreaties nor lamentations availed to deter him from the completion of enterprises. But certain remembrances, instead of inspiring him with the courage he now needed, only added to them those of terror and consternation, until they compelled him to return to that first image of Lucia, against which he had been seeking to fortify his courage.—She still lives, said he:—She is here; I am in time; I can yet say to her, Go, and be happy; I can yet see that countenance change; I can even say, Forgive me! Forgive me? I ask forgiveness? And of a woman, too? To what am I reduced! I'm no longer a man; surely, no longer a man! Away! these are fooleries that have many a time passed through my head. This will take its flight too.—

And to effect such a riddance, he began seeking some important subject, some of the many that often occupied his mind, in hopes he might be entirely engrossed by it; but he sought in vain. All appeared changed: And

when he sought an occupation for the morrow, he could only remember that on the morrow he might liberate his unfortunate prisoner.

—I will set her free; yes, I will. I will fly to her by daybreak, and bid her depart safely. She shall be accompanied by— And my promise? My engagement? Don Rodrigo? Who is Don Rodrigo?—

Like one suddenly surprised by an unexpected and embarrassing question from a superior, the Unnamed hastily sought for an answer to the query he had just put to himself, or rather which had been suggested to him by that new voice which had all at once made itself heard, and sprung up to be, as it were, a judge of his former self. He tried to imagine any reasons which could have induced him, almost before being requested, to engage in inflicting so much suffering, without any incentives of hatred or fear, on a poor unknown creature, only to render a service to this man; but instead of succeeding in discovering such motives as he would now have deemed sufficient to excuse the deed, he could not even imagine how he had ever been induced to undertake it. The willingness, rather than the determination to do so, had been the instantaneous impulse of a mind obedient to its old and habitual feelings, the consequence of a thousand antecedent actions; and to account for this one deed, the unhappy self-examiner found himself involved in an examination of his whole life.

He sprang up impetuously in his bed, eagerly stretched out his hand toward the wall at his side, touched a pistol, grasped it, reached it down, and at the moment of finishing a life which had become insupportable, his thoughts, seized with terror and superstitious dread, rushed forward to the time which would still continue to flow on after his end. The darkness and silence around him presented death in a still more mournful and frightful aspect; it seemed to him that he would not have hesitated

in open day, out of doors, and in the presence of spectators, to throw himself into the water, and vanish. Absorbed in such tormenting reflections, another thought flashed across his mind.—If this other life, of which they told me when I was a boy, of which everybody talks now, as if it were a certain thing, if there be not such a thing, if it be an invention of the priests, what am I doing? why should I die? what matters all that I have done? what matters it? If it is an absurdity, my—But if there really be another life.—

At such a doubt, at such a risk, he was seized with a blacker and deeper despair, from which even death afforded no escape. He dropped the pistol, and lay with his fingers twined among his hair, his teeth chattering, and trembling in every limb. Suddenly the words he had heard repeated a few hours before rose to his remembrance, "God pardons so many sins for one deed of mercy!" They did not come to him with that tone of humble supplication in which they had been pronounced; they came with a voice of authority, which at the same time excited a distant glimmering of hope. It was a moment of relief: he raised his hands from his temples, and, in a more composed attitude, fixed his mind's eye on her who had uttered the words; she seemed to him no longer like his prisoner and suppliant, but in the posture of one who dispenses mercy and consolation.

He dreaded the light which would show him to his followers so miserably changed; then he longed for it, as if it would bring light also to his gloomy thoughts. And, lo; about break of day, a few moments after Lucia had fallen asleep, a floating and confused murmur reached his ear, bringing with it something joyous and festive in its sound. He distinguished a distant chiming of bells. Immediately afterwards his ear caught another, and still nearer peal: then another, and another.—What rejoicings are these? What are they all so merry about?

What is their cause of gladness?—He sprang from his bed of thorns, went to the window and looked out. He distinguished in the road, at the bottom of the valley, numbers of people passing eagerly along—some leaving their dwellings and moving on with the crowd, and all taking the same direction toward the outlet of the vale on the right of the castle; he could even distinguish the joyous bearing and holiday dress of the passengers.

Calling a confidential bravo who slept in the adjoining room, he asked him what was the cause of this movement. The man replied that he knew no more than his master, but would go directly to make inquiry. The Signor remained with his eyes riveted upon the moving spectacle, which increasing light rendered every moment more distinct. He watched crowds pass by, and new crowds constantly appear. Their behavior evidently indicated a common haste and joy.

CHAPTER XXII

CARDINAL FEDERIGO BORROMEO

SHORTLY afterward the bravo returned with the information that Cardinal Federigo Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, had arrived the day before, with the purpose of spending there the day that was now just dawning; that the news of his arrival had excited a desire in the people to see this great man; and that the bells were ringing, both to express their joy and more widely to diffuse the glad intelligence. When again alone, the Signor continued to look down into the valley, still more absorbed in thought. —For a man! Everybody eager, everybody joyful, at the sight of a man! And yet, doubtless, each has his own demon that torments him. But none, none will have one like mine! None will have passed such a night as I!

What has this man about him to make so many people merry? Some pence, perhaps, that he will distribute at random among them. But all these cannot be going for alms. Well, then, a few acknowledgments and salutations—a word or two. Oh! if he had any words for me that could impart peace! Why shouldn't I go too? Why not? I will go! what else can I do? I will go; and I will talk with him; face to face, I'll have some talk with him. What shall I say, though? I'll hear first what the man has to say for himself!—

Having come to this vague determination, he hastily finished dressing, put on a greatcoat, which had something of a military cut about it; and taking from the wall a carabine which was almost as famous as himself, he swung it across his shoulders. Then he put on his hat, and repaired at once to the room in which he had left Lucia. He knocked at the door, at the same time letting them know by his voice who he was. The old woman sprang out of bed, threw some articles of clothing around her, and flew to open the door. The Signor entered, and, casting a glance around the room, saw Lucia lying perfectly quiet in her little corner.

"Does she sleep?" he asked, of the old woman; "but is she sleeping there? Were these my orders, you old hag?"

"I did all I could," replied the woman; "but she wouldn't eat, and she wouldn't come"—

"Let her sleep quietly; take care you don't disturb her; and when she awakes Martha shall wait in the next room; and you must send her to fetch anything that she may ask for. When she awakes tell her that I—that the master has gone out for a little while, that he will be back soon, and that he will do all she wishes."

The old woman stood perfectly astonished, thinking: —This girl must surely be some princess!

The Signor then left the room, took up his carabine,

sent Martha to wait in the adjoining apartment, and the first bravo he met to keep guard, that no one but this woman might presume to approach Lucia; and then, leaving the castle, took the descent with a rapid step.

The bravoes whom he met ascending stopped respectfully as their lord passed, waiting to see whether he had any orders to give, or whether he wished any of them to accompany him on some expedition, and seemed astonished at his countenance and the glances he returned in answer to their salutations.

When, however, he reached the base, and entered the public road, it was a very different matter. There was a general whispering among the first passengers who observed him, an exchange of suspicious looks, and an endeavor on each side to get out of his path. On reaching the village, he found a large crowd assembled, and the throng fell back to make way for him. He accosted one of these prudent gentry, and asked where the Cardinal was. "In the curate's house," replied the person addressed, reverently, at the same time pointing out the mansion. The Signor went forward, entered a little court, where many priests were assembled, all of whom regarded him with surprised and doubtful looks, and saw before him an open door, which gave admission into a small hall. Taking his carabine from his shoulder, he deposited it in one corner of the little court, and then entered the hall, where he was received with significant glances and murmurs. Turning to one of those who surrounded him, he asked where the Cardinal was, and said that he wished to speak to him.

"I am a stranger," replied the priest; but hastily glancing around, he called the chaplain and cross-bearer, who, seated in a corner of the hall, was saying to his companion: "This man? this notorious character? what can he have to do here? Make way!" However, at this call, which resounded in the general silence, he was

obliged to come forward; he made a lowly reverence to the Unnamed, listened to his inquiry, stood hesitating for a moment, and then stammered: "I don't know whether his illustrious Lordship—just now—is to be.— But I will go and see." And he very unwillingly carried the message into the adjoining room, where the Cardinal was by himself.

Federigo Borromeo, born in 1564, was among those characters, rare in whatever age, who have employed singular talents, all the resources of great wealth, all the advantages of privileged rank, and an unwearying diligence, in the search and exercise of the highest objects and principles. Amid comforts and luxuries, he attended, even from childhood, to those lessons of self-denial and humility, and those maxims on the vanity of worldly pleasures, and the sinfulness of pride, on true dignity and true riches, which, whether acknowledged or not in the heart, have been transmitted from one generation to another in the most elementary instructions in religion. By these he understood that life was not designed to be a burden to many, and a pleasure to only a few; but was intended as a time of employment for all, of which every one would have to give an account; and he began from a child to consider how he could render his own life useful and holy.

In 1580 he declared his resolution of dedicating himself to the ministry of the Church, and received ordination from the hands of his cousin Carlo, whom long and universal suffrage had already signalized as a saint. Shortly afterward, he entered the college founded by this relative in Pavia, which still bears the name of their house; and here, while applying himself with assiduity to the occupations which were prescribed, he added to them two others of his own free will; and these were, to give instruction to the most ignorant and neglected among the population, in the doctrines of the Christian

religion; and to visit, assist, comfort, and relieve the sick and needy. He employed the authority conceded to him by all around, in inducing his companions to second him in such works of charity.

That, during the life of the Cardinal Carlo, his senior by twenty-six years, in his authoritative and, so to say, solemn presence, surrounded by homage and respectful silence, incited by the fame, and impressed with the tokens of sanctity, Federigo, as a boy and a youth, should have endeavored to conform himself to the behavior and talents of such a cousin, is certainly not to be wondered at; but it is, indeed, much to be able to say, that, after his death, no one could perceive that Federigo, then twenty years of age, had lost a guide and censor. Few lives have been more devoted to serving others than his own, but because he considered himself neither worthy enough of so high and perilous a service, nor sufficiently competent for it, when the Archbishopric of Milan was offered to him in 1595 by Clement VIII he seemed much disturbed, and refused the charge without hesitation. He yielded afterward, however, to the express command of the Pope.

In Federigo, as Archbishop, was apparent a remarkable and constant carefulness to devote to himself no more of his wealth, his time, his care—in short, of his whole self, than was absolutely necessary. So sparing and scrupulous was he in his personal outlay, that he was careful never to leave off a dress which was not completely worn out. That nothing might be wasted of the remnants of his frugal table, he assigned them to a hospital for the poor. Such instances of economy might, perhaps, suggest the idea of a close, parsimonious, overcareful virtue, of a mind wrapped up in attention to minutiæ, and incapable of elevated designs, were it not for the Ambrosian Library, still standing, which Federigo projected with such noble magnificence, and executed,

from the foundations upward, with such munificent liberality; to supply which with books and manuscripts, besides the presentation of those he had already collected with great labor and expense, he sent eight of the most learned and experienced men he could find, to make purchases throughout Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Flanders, Greece, Lebanon, and Jerusalem. By this means, he succeeded in gathering about thirty thousand printed volumes and fourteen thousand manuscripts. To this library he united a college of doctors. Their office was to cultivate various branches of study, theology, history, polite literature, and the Oriental languages, each being obliged to publish some work on the subject assigned to him. To this he also added a college, which he called Trilingue, for the study of the Greek, Latin, and Italian languages; a college of pupils, for instruction in these several faculties and languages, that they might become professors in their turn; a printing-office for the Oriental languages, for Hebrew, that is to say, Chaldaic, Arabic, Persian, and Armenian; a gallery of paintings, another of statues, and a school for the three principal arts of design. The works remaining from him, great and small, Latin and Italian, published and manuscript, amount to about a hundred volumes, preserved in the library he himself founded.

CHAPTER XXIII

A CHANGE OF HEART

CARDINAL FEDERIGO was employed, according to his usual custom in every leisure interval, in study, until the hour arrived for repairing to the church for the celebration of divine service, when the chaplain and cross-bearer entered with a disturbed and gloomy countenance.

"A strange visitor, my noble Lord—strange indeed!"

"Who?" asked the Cardinal.

"No less a personage than the Signor ——," replied the chaplain; and he uttered the name which we cannot give to our readers. He then added: "He is here in person; and demands nothing less than to be introduced to your illustrious Grace."

"He!" said the Cardinal, with an animated look, shutting his book and rising from his seat; "let him come in directly!"

"But," rejoined the chaplain, without attempting to move, "your illustrious Lordship must surely be aware who he is: that outlaw, that famous"—

"And is it not a most happy circumstance for a bishop, that such a man should feel a wish to come and seek an interview with him?"

"But," insisted the chaplain, "we may never speak of certain things, because my Lord says that it is all nonsense: but, when it comes to the point, I think it is a duty. Zeal makes many enemies, my Lord; and we know positively that more than one ruffian has dared to boast that some day or other"—

"And what have they done?" interrupted the Cardinal.

"I say that this man is a plotter of mischief, a desperate character, who holds correspondence with the most violent desperadoes, and who may be sent"—

"Oh what discipline is this," again interrupted Federigo, smiling, "for the soldiers to exhort their general to cowardice?" Then resuming a grave and thoughtful air, he continued: "Saint Carlo would not have deliberated whether he ought to receive such a man: he would have gone to seek him. Let him be admitted directly: he has already waited too long."

The chaplain moved toward the door, saying in his heart:—There's no remedy: these saints are all obstinate.

Having opened the door, and surveyed the room where

the Signor and his companions were, he saw that the latter had crowded together on one side, where they sat whispering and cautiously peeping at their visitor, while he was left alone in one corner. The chaplain approached him, saying: "His Grace waits for your Lordship. Will you be good enough to come with me?"

On reaching the apartment, the chaplain opened the door, and introduced the Unnamed. Federigo advanced to meet him with a happy and serene look and his hand extended, as if to welcome an expected guest, at the same time making a sign to the chaplain to go out, which was immediately obeyed.

Federigo fixed on the face of the Unnamed a penetrating look, long accustomed to gather from this index what was passing in the mind; and, imagining he discovered, under that dark and troubled mien, something every moment more corresponding with the hope he had conceived on the first announcement of such a visit, "Oh!" he cried, in an animated voice, "what a welcome visit is this! and how thankful I ought to be to you for taking such a step, although it may convey to me a little reproof!"

"Reproof!" exclaimed the Signor, much surprised, but soothed by his words and manner, and glad that the Cardinal had broken the ice, and started some sort of conversation.

"Certainly, it conveys to me a reproof," replied the Archbishop, "for allowing you to be beforehand with me when so often, and for so long a time, I might and ought to have come to you myself."

"You come to me! Do you know who I am? Did they deliver my name rightly?"

"Do you think I should feel such happiness at the announcement and visit of a stranger? It is you who make me experience it; you, I say, whom I ought to have sought; you whom I have, at least, loved and wept over,

and for whom I have so often prayed; you, among all my children, whom I should most have desired to receive and embrace, if I had thought I might hope for such a thing."

The Unnamed stood astonished and affected at this warm reception. "Well!" resumed Federigo, still more affectionately, "you have good news to tell me; and you keep me so long expecting it?"

"Good news! I have hell in my heart; and can I tell you any good tidings? Tell me, if you know, what good news you can expect from such as I?"

"That God has touched your heart, and would make you His own," replied the Cardinal, calmly.

"God! God! If I could see Him! If I could hear Him! Where is this God?"

"Do *you* ask this? And who has Him nearer than you? Do you not feel Him in your heart, overcoming, agitating you, never leaving you at ease, and at the same time drawing you forward, presenting to your view a hope of tranquillity and consolation which shall be full and boundless, as soon as you recognize Him, acknowledge, and implore Him?"

"Oh, surely there is something within that oppresses, that consumes me! But if this be God—if He be such as they say—what do you suppose He can do with me?"

These words were uttered with an accent of despair, but Federigo, with a solemn tone, as of calm inspiration, replied: "What can God do with you? What would He wish to make of you? A token of His power and goodness: He would acquire through you a glory, such as others could not give Him. The world has long cried out against you, hundreds and thousands of voices have declared their detestation of your deeds." (The Unnamed shuddered, and felt for a moment surprised at hearing such unusual language addressed to him, and still more surprise that he felt no anger, but rather, almost

a relief.) "What glory," pursued Federigo, "will thus redound to God! *They* may be voices of alarm, of self-interest; of justice, perhaps. But when you, yourself, rise to condemn your past life, to become your own accuser, then, indeed, God will be glorified! And you ask what God can do with you. Pardon you! save you! finish in you the work of redemption! Oh, think! if I, a humble and feeble creature, long so ardently for your salvation that, for its sake, I would joyfully give the few days that still remain to me, think what, and how great, must be the love of Him who has bid and enabled me to regard you with a charity that consumes me!"

While these words fell from his lips, his face, his expression, his whole manner, evinced his deep feeling of what he uttered. The countenance of his auditor changed, from a wild and convulsive look, first to astonishment and attention, and then gradually yielded to deeper and less painful emotions; his eyes, which from infancy had been unaccustomed to weep, became suffused; and when the words ceased, he covered his face with his hands, and burst into a flood of tears.

"Great and good God!" exclaimed Federigo, raising his hands and eyes to heaven, "what have I ever done, an unprofitable servant, an idle shepherd, that Thou shouldst call me to this banquet of grace! that Thou shouldst make me worthy of being an instrument in so joyful a miracle!" So saying, he extended his hand to take that of the Unnamed.

"No!" cried the penitent nobleman; "no! keep away from me: defile not that innocent and beneficent hand. You don't know all that this hand has committed."

"Suffer me," said Federigo, taking it with affectionate violence, "suffer me to press the hand which will repair so many wrongs, dispense so many benefits, comfort so many afflicted, and be extended, disarmed, peacefully, and humbly, to so many enemies."

"It is too much!" said the Unnamed, sobbing, "leave me, my Lord; good Federigo, leave me! A crowded assembly awaits you; so many good people, so many innocent creatures, so many come from a distance, to see you for once, to hear you; and you are staying to talk—with whom?"

"We will leave the ninety and nine sheep," replied the Cardinal; "they are in safety, upon the mountain: I wish to remain with that which was lost." So saying, he threw his arm round the neck of the Unnamed, who, after attempting to disengage himself, and making a momentary resistance, yielded, completely overcome by this vehement expression of affection, embraced the Cardinal in his turn, and buried in his shoulder his trembling and altered face.

Disengaging himself, at length, from this embrace, the Unnamed again covered his eyes with his hand, and raising his face to heaven, exclaimed: "God is, indeed, great! God is, indeed, good! I know myself now, now I understand what I am; my sins are present before me, and I shudder at the thought of myself; yet I feel an alleviation, yes, even a joy, such as I never have before known during the whole of my horrible life!"

"It is a little taste," said Federigo, "that God gives you, to incline you to His service, and encourage you resolutely to enter upon the new course of life which lies before you, and in which you will have so much to undo, so much to repair, so much to mourn over!"

"Unhappy man that I am!" exclaimed the Signor;" how many, oh, how many . . . . things for which I can do nothing besides mourn! But I have undertakings which I can quickly arrest, which I can easily undo, and repair."

Federigo listened attentively, while the Unnamed briefly related his attempt upon Lucia, the sufferings and terrors of the unhappy girl, her importunate entreaties,

the frenzy that these entreaties had aroused within him, and how she was still in the castle.

"Ah, then! let us lose no time!" exclaimed Federigo, breathless with eagerness and compassion. "You are indeed blessed! This is an earnest of God's forgiveness! Do you know where our unhappy protégée comes from?"

The Signor named Lucia's village.

"It's not far from this," said the Cardinal, "God be praised!" So saying, he went toward a little table, and rang a bell. The cross-bearing chaplain immediately attended the summons with a look of anxiety, and instantly glanced toward the Unnamed. At the sight of his altered countenance, and his eyes still red with weeping, he turned an inquiring gaze upon the Cardinal; and perceiving, amid the invariable composure of the countenance, a look of solemn pleasure and unusual solicitude, he would have stood with open mouth, had not the Cardinal quickly aroused him by asking whether, among the parish-priests who were assembled in the next room, there were one from Lecco.

"There is, your illustrious Grace," replied the chaplain.

"Let him come in directly," said Federigo, "and with him the priest of this parish."

The chaplain quitted the room, and on entering the hall where the clergy were assembled, he said, "His most noble and very reverend Lordship desires to speak with the Signor Curato of this parish, and the Signor Curato of Lecco."

The first person summoned immediately came forward; and, at the same time, issued from the midst of the crowd an "I?" drawled forth with an intonation of surprise.

"Are you not the Signor Curato of Lecco?" replied the chaplain.

"I am; but"—

"His most noble and very reverend Lordship asks for you."

"Me?" again replied the same voice, clearly expressing in this monosyllable, "What *can* they want with me?' Then came forth Don Abbondio himself, with an unwilling step, and a countenance between astonishment and disgust. The chaplain beckoned to him, and escorting them to the door, he opened it, and introduced them into the apartment.

The Cardinal relinquished the hand of the Unnamed, with whom, meanwhile, he had been concerting arrangements, and withdrawing a little aside, beckoned to the curate of the village. Briefly relating the circumstances, he asked whether he could immediately find a trustworthy woman who would be willing to go to the castle in a litter, and fetch away Lucia; a kind and clever person, who would know how to conduct herself in so novel an expedition, and whose manners and language would be most likely to encourage and tranquilize the unfortunate girl, to whom, after so much anguish and alarm, even liberation itself might be an additional cause of apprehension. After a moment's thought, the curate said that he knew the very person, and then took his departure. The Cardinal, now calling to him the chaplain, desired him to have a litter and bearers immediately prepared, and to see that two mules were saddled, for riders; and as soon as he had quitted the apartment, turned to Don Abbondio.

This worthy gentleman, who had kept tolerably close to the Archbishop, that he might be at a respectful distance from the other Signor, now advanced, and, making a respectful bow, said: "I was told your most illustrious Lordship wanted me; but I think there must be some misunderstanding."

"There is no misunderstanding, I assure you," replied Federigo; "I have glad news to give you, and a pleasant

and most agreeable task to impose upon you. One of your parishioners, whom you must have lamented as lost, Lucia Mondella, is again found, and is near at hand, in the house of my good friend here; and you will go now with him, and a woman, whom the Signor Curato of this place has gone to seek; you will go, I say, to fetch one of your children, and bring her here."

Don Abbondio did his best to conceal the vexation, alarm, and dismay excited by this proposal, or command; and unable any longer to restrain or dismiss a look of inexpressible discontent already gathering in his countenance, he could only hide it by profound reverence, in token of obedient acceptance; nor did he again raise his face but to make another equally profound obeisance to the Unnamed, with a piteous look, which seemed to say: "I am in your hands, have pity upon me!"

The Cardinal then asked him what relatives Lucia had.

"Of near relatives, with whom she lives, or might live, she has only a mother," replied Don Abbondio.

"Is she at home?"

"Yes, my Lord."

"Well," replied Federigo, "since this poor girl cannot be so directly restored to her own home, it will be a great consolation to her to see her mother as quickly as possible; so, if the Signor Curato of this village doesn't return before I go to church, I request you will tell him to find a cart, or some kind of conveyance, and despatch a person of discretion to fetch her mother here."

"Had not *I* better go?" said Don Abbondio.

"No, no, not you; I've already requested you to undertake another commission," replied the Cardinal.

"I proposed it," rejoined Don Abbondio, "to prepare her poor mother for the news. She is a very sensitive woman, and it requires one who knows her disposition, and how to go to work with her the right way, or he will do her more harm than good."

"And therefore I have requested you to acquaint the Signor Curato of my wish that a proper person should be chosen for this office: you will do better elsewhere," replied the Cardinal. He gazed upon the curate's face, and there readily detected his fear of journeying with that terrible Signor, and of being his guest even for a few moments. Desirous, therefore, entirely to dissipate these cowardly apprehensions, yet unwilling to draw the curate aside and whisper with him in secret, while his new friend formed the third of their party, he judged that the best plan would be to do what, indeed, he would have done without such a motive, that is, address the Unnamed himself; and thus Don Abbondio might at length understand, from his replies, and he was no longer an object of fear. He returned, therefore, to the Unnamed, and addressing him with that frank cordiality which may be met with in a new and powerful affection, as well as in an intimacy of long standing, "Don't think," said he, "that I shall be content with this visit for to-day. You will return, won't you, with this worthy clergyman?"

"Will I return?" replied the Unnamed. "Should you refuse me, I would obstinately remain outside your door, like the beggar. I want to talk with you; I want to hear you, to see you; I deeply need you!"

Federigo took his hand and pressed it, saying: "Do the clergymen of this village, then, and me, the favor of dining with us to-day. I shall expect you. In the meanwhile, I must go to offer up prayers and praises with the people; and you to reap the first fruits of mercy."

On quitting the apartment, in company with the Unnamed, whose hand he still grasped, the Cardinal cast another glance upon the poor man who remained behind, looking very awkward and mortified, and with a doleful expression of countenance. Thinking that possibly his vexation arose from being apparently overlooked, and left, as it were, in a corner, particularly in contrast with

the notoriously wicked character now so warmly received and welcomed, he turned toward him in passing and hung back for a moment, and said to him, with friendly smile: "Signor Curato thou wert ever with me in the house of our kind Father, but this one has sinned and now repenteth."

"Oh, how glad I am to hear it!" said Don Abbondio, making a profound reverence to the two.

The Archbishop then went on, gave a slight push to the door, which was immediately opened from without by two servants who stood outside, and the notable pair stood before the longing eyes of the clergy assembled in the apartment. Behind them came Don Abbondio, to whom no one paid any attention.

When they had reached the middle of the room, the Cardinal's groom of the chamber entered on the opposite side, and informed his master that he had executed all the orders communicated to him by the chaplain; that the litter and mules were in readiness, and they only waited the arrival of the woman whom the curate was to bring. The Cardinal bade him tell the priest, when he came back, that Don Abbondio wished to speak with him; and then all the rest was left under the direction of the latter and the Unnamed, whom the Cardinal again shook warmly by the hand on taking leave, saying, "I shall expect you." Then, turning to salute Don Abbondio with a bow, he set off in the direction of the church, followed by the clergy, half grouped and half in procession, while the fellow-travelers remained alone in the apartment.

The Unnamed stood lost in his own thoughts, and impatient for the moment when he might go to liberate his Lucia from her sufferings and confinement—*his*, now, in a very different sense from that in which she was so the day before: and his face expressed a feeling of intense agitation, which, to Don Abbondio's suspicious eye,

might easily appear something worse. He peeped and glanced at him from the corner of his eye, and longed to start some friendly conversation. He had just thought of something to say, and was on the point of opening his mouth to remark: "I never anticipated the pleasure of being thrown into such honorable company," when the groom of the chamber entered, with the curate of the parish, who announced that the woman was waiting in the litter; and then turned to Don Abbondio, to receive from him the further commission of the Cardinal. Don Abbondio delivered himself as well as he could in the confusion of mind under which he was laboring; and then, drawing up to the groom, said to him: "Pray give me, at least, a quiet beast; for, to tell the truth, I am but a poor horseman."

"You may imagine," replied the groom, with a half-smile; "it is the mule of the secretary, who is a very learned man."

"That will do," replied Don Abbondio, and he continued to ruminate:—Heaven send me a good one.

The Signor had readily set off the moment he heard the announcement; but on reaching the door, and perceiving that Don Abbondio was remaining behind, he stood still to wait for him. When he came up, hastily, with an apologizing look, the Signor bowed and made him pass on first, with a courteous and humble air, which somewhat reanimated the spirits of the unfortunate and tormented man.

The litter, which stood a few paces in advance, and was borne by two mules, moved forward at the word of the attendant, and the whole party set off.

When they got beyond the habitations into the open country, and in the often entirely deserted windings of the road, a still darker cloud overspread his thoughts. The only object on which his eye could rest with any confidence, was the attendant on the litter, who, belong-

ing to the Cardinal's household, must certainly be an honest man; and who, besides, did not look like a coward. From time to time travelers appeared, sometimes even in groups, who were flocking to see the Cardinal, and this was a great relief to Don Abbondio; it was, however, but transitory, and he was advancing toward that tremendous valley, where he should meet none but the vassals of his companion; and what vassals! He now more than ever longed to enter into conversation with his companion, both to sound him a little more, and to keep him in good humor; but even this wish vanished on seeing him so completely absorbed in his own thoughts.

They entered the valley. How must Don Abbondio have felt then! That renowned valley, of which he had heard such black and horrible stories, to be actually within it!

They climbed the ascent, and reached the summit. The bravoes on the terrace and round the gate retired on either side to make room for him; the Unnamed motioned to them to retreat no farther, spurted forward and passed before the litter, beckoned to the driver and Don Abbondio to follow him, entered an outer court, and thence into a second, went toward a small postern, made signs to a bravo, who was hastening to hold his stirrup, to keep back, and said to him, "You there, and no one nearer." He then dismounted, and holding the bridle, advanced toward the litter, addressed himself to the woman who had just drawn back the curtain, and said to her in an undertone: "Comfort her directly; let her understand at once that she is at liberty, and among friends. God will reward you for it." He then ordered the driver to open the door, and assist her to get out. Advancing, then, to Don Abbondio, with a look of greater serenity than the poor man had yet seen, or thought it possible he could see, on his countenance, in which there might now be traced joy at the good work which was at length so

near its completion, he lent him his arm to dismount saying to him at the same time, in a low voice: "Signor Curato, I do not apologize for the trouble you have had on my account; you are bearing it for One who rewards bountifully, and for this His poor creature!"

This look, and these words, once more put some heart into Don Abbondio; and, drawing a long breath, which for an hour past had been striving ineffectually to find vent, he replied, whether or not in a submissive tone it need not be asked: "Is your Lordship joking with me? But—" And, accepting the hand which was so courteously offered, he slid down from the saddle as best he could. The Unnamed took the bridle, and handed it with his own to the driver, bidding him wait there outside for them. Taking a key from his pocket, he opened the postern, admitted the curate and the woman, followed them in, advanced to lead the way, went to the foot of the stairs, and all three ascended in silence.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE REUNION

LUCIA had aroused herself only a short time before; and part of that time she had been striving to sever the disturbed dreams of sleep from the remembrances and images of a reality which too much resembled the feverish visions of sickness. The old woman, with a constrained voice of humility, said: "Ah! have you slept? You might have slept in bed: I told you so often enough last night." And receiving no reply, she continued, in a tone of pettish entreaty: "Just eat something; do be prudent. Oh, how wretched you look! You must want something to eat."

"No, no; I want to go away, I want to go to my

mother. Your master promised I should; he said, 'To-morrow morning.' Where is he?"

"He's gone out; but he said he'd be back soon, and would do all you wished."

"Did he say so? did he say so? Very well; I wish to go to my mother, directly, directly."

The noise of footsteps was heard in the adjoining room; then a tap at the door. The old woman ran to it, and asked, "Who's there?"

"Open the door," replied the well-known voice, gently.

The old woman drew back the bolt, and, with a slight push, the Unnamed half opened the door, bade her come out, and hastily ushered in Don Abbondio and the good woman. He then nearly closed the door again, and waiting himself ouside, sent the aged matron to a distant part of the castle.

Lucia looked up, and beheld a priest and a woman; this somewhat reanimated her; she looked more closely; is it he, or not? At last she recognized Don Abbondio, and remained with her eyes fixed, as if by enchantment. The woman then drew near, and bending over her, looked at her compassionately, taking both her hands as if to caress and raise her at the same time, and saying: "Oh, my poor girl! come with us, come with us."

"Who are you?" demanded Lucia; but, without listening to the reply, she again turned to Don Abbondio, who was standing two or three yards distant, even his countenance expressing some compassion; she gazed at him again, and exclaimed: "You! Is it you? The Signor Curato? Where are we? Oh, I have lost my senses!"

"No, no," replied Don Abbondio, "it is indeed I: take courage. Don't you see we are here to take you away? I am really your curate, come hither on purpose on horseback."

As if she had suddenly regained all her strength, Lucia sprang upon her feet; then again fixing her eyes on those

two faces, she said, "It is the Madonna, then, that has sent you."

"I believe indeed it is," said the good woman.

"But can we go away? Can we really go away?" resumed Lucia, lowering her voice. and assuming a timid and suspicious look. "And all these people?" she continued, with her lips compressed, and quivering with fear and horror. "And that Lord—that man! He did, indeed, promise"—

"He is here himself, come on purpose with us," said Don Abbondio; "he is outside waiting for us. Let us go at once; we mustn't keep a man like him waiting."

At this moment, he of whom they were speaking opened the door, and showing himself at the entrance, came forward into the room. Lucia, who but just before had wished for him, now could not restrain a sudden shudder; she started, held her breath, and throwing herself on the good woman's shoulder, buried her face in her bosom. At the first sight of that countenance, on which, the evening before, he had been unable to maintain a steady gaze, the Unnamed had suddenly checked his steps; now, at the sight of her impulse of terror, he cast his eyes on the ground, stood for a moment silent and motionless, and then replying to what she had not expressed in words, "It is true," exclaimed he; "forgive me!"

"He is come to set you free; he's no longer what he was; he has become good; don't you hear him asking your forgiveness?" said the good woman, in Lucia's ear.

"Could he say more? Come, lift up your head; don't be a baby; we can go directly," said Don Abbondio. Lucia raised her face, looked at the Unnamed, and seeing his head bent low, and his embarrassed and humble look, she was seized with a mingled feeling of comfort, gratitude, and pity, as she replied: "Oh! my Lord! God reward you for this deed of mercy!"

"And you a thousandfold, for the good you do me by these words."

So saying, he turned round, went toward the door, and led the way out of the room. Lucia, completely reassured, followed, leaning on the worthy woman's arm, while Don Abbondio brought up the rear. They descended the staircase, and reached the little door that led into the court. The Unnamed opened it, went toward the litter, and, with a certain politeness, almost mingled with timidity, offered his arm to Lucia, to assist her to get in; and afterward to the worthy dame.

Don Abbondio mounted much more nimbly than he had the first time; and as soon as the Unnamed was also seated, the party resumed their way. The Signor's brow was raised: his countenance had regained its customary expression of authority.

The good woman immediately drew the curtains over the little windows; and then, affectionately taking Lucia's hands, she applied herself to comfort her with expressions of pity, congratulation, and tenderness. She named the village she came from, and to which they were now going.

"Yes!" said Lucia, who knew how short a distance it was from her own. "Ah, most Holy Madonna, I praise thee! My mother! my mother!"

"We will send to fetch her directly," said the good woman, not knowing that it was already done.

"Yes, yes, and God will reward you for it. And you, who are you? How have you come—"

"Our curate sent me," said the good woman, "because God has touched this Signor's heart (blessed be His name!), and he came to our village to speak to the Signor Cardinal Archbishop, for he is there in his visitation, that holy man of God; and he has repented of his great sins, and wished to change his life; and he told the Cardinal that he had caused a poor innocent to be seized, meaning

you, at the instigation of another person, who had no fear of God; but the curate didn't tell me who it was."

Lucia raised her eyes to heaven.

"You know who it was perhaps," continued the good woman."Well; the Signor Cardinal thought that as there was a young girl in the question, there ought to be a woman to come back with her; and he told the curate to look for one; and the curate, in his goodness, came to me."

"Oh, the Lord recompense you for your kindness!"

"Well, just listen to me, my poor child! And the Signor Curato bade me encourage you, and try to comfort you directly, and point out to you how the Lord has saved you by a miracle."

"Ah, yes, by a miracle indeed. through the intercession of the Madonna!"

"Well, that you should have a right spirit, and forgive him who has done you this wrong, and be thankful that God has been merciful to him, yes, and pray for him, too; for, besides that you will be rewarded for it, you will also find your heart lightened."

Lucia replied with a look which expressed assent as clearly as words could have done, and with a sweetness which words could not have conveyed.

At last they reached the foot of the descent, and issued from the valley. The brow of the Unnamed became gradually smoother. Don Abbondio, too, assumed a more natural expression, released his head somewhat from imprisonment between his shoulders, stretched his legs and arms, tried to be a little more at his ease, which, in truth, made him look like a different creature, drew his breath more freely, and, with a calmer mind, proceeded to contemplate other and remoter dangers.—What will that villain of a Don Rodrigo say? To be left in this way, wronged, and open to ridicule; just fancy whether that won't be a bitter dose. Now's the time

when he'll play the devil outright. It remains to be seen whether he won't be angry with me, because I have been mixed up with this business. If he has already chosen to send those two demons to meet me on the high road with such an intimation, what will he do now, Heaven knows! What will his most illustrious Grace do to protect me, after having brought me into the dance? Can he ensure that this cursed wretch won't play me a worse trick than before? Must I go and say that I came here at the express command of his illustrious Grace, and not with my own good will? That would seem as if I favored the wicked side. Oh, sacred Heaven! I favor the wicked side! Well; the best plan will be to tell Perpetua the case as it is, and then leave it to her to circulate it; provided my Lord doesn't take a fancy to make the whole matter public, and bring even me into the scene. At any rate, as soon as ever we arrive, if he's out of church, I'll go and take my leave of him as quickly as possible; if he's not, I'll leave an apology, and go off home at once. Lucia is well attended to; there's no need for me; and after so much trouble, I, too, may claim a little repose.

The party arrived before the services in the church were over; they passed through the still assembled crowd, which manifested no less emotion than on the former occasion, and then separated. The two riders turned aside into a small square, at the extremity of which stood the curate's residence, while the litter went forward to that of the good woman.

Don Abbondio kept his word: he dismounted, paid the most obsequious compliments to the Unnamed, and begged him to make an apology for him to his Grace, as he must return immediately to his parish on urgent business. He then went to seek for what he called his horse, that is to say, his walking-stick, which he had left in a corner of the hall, and set off on foot. The Unnamed remained to wait till the Cardinal returned from church.

The good woman, having accommodated Lucia with the best seat in the best place in her kitchen, hastened to prepare a little refreshment for her, refusing, with a kind of rustic cordiality, her reiterated expressions of thanks and apology.

Invigorated in body, and gradually revived in heart, Lucia now began to settle her dress, from an instinctive habit of cleanliness and modesty: she tied up and arranged afresh her loose and disheveled tresses, and adjusted the handkerchief over her bosom, and around her neck. In doing this, her fingers became entangled in the chaplet she had hung there; her eye rested upon it; it aroused an instantaneous agitation in her heart; the remembrance of her vow, hitherto suppressed and stifled by the presence of so many other sensations, suddenly rushed upon her mind, and presented itself clearly and distinctly to her view. The scarcely-recovered powers of her soul were again at once overcome; and had she not been previously prepared by a life of innocence, resignation, and confiding faith, the consternation she experienced at that moment would have amounted to desperation. After a tumultuous burst of such thoughts as were not to be expressed in words, the only ones she could form in her mind were—Oh, poor me, what have I done!

But hardly had she indulged the thought, when she felt a kind of terror at having done so. She recollected all the circumstances of the vow, her insupportable anguish, her despair of all human succor, the fervency of her prayer, the entireness of feeling with which the promise had been made. And after obtaining her petition, to repent of her promise seemed to her nothing less than sacrilegious ingratitude and perfidity toward God and the Virgin; she imagined that such unfaithfulness would draw down upon her new and more terrible misfortunes, in which she could not find consolation even in prayer;

and she hastened to abjure her momentary regret. Reverently taking the rosary from her neck, and holding it in her trembling hand, she confirmed and renewed the vow, imploring, at the same time, with heart-rending earnestness, that strength might be given her to fulfil it; and that she might be spared such thoughts and occurrences as would be likely, if not to disturb her resolution, at least to harass her beyond endurance. The distance of Renzo, without any probability of return, that distance which she had hitherto felt so painful, now seemed to her a dispensation of Providence, who had made the two events work together for the same end; and she sought to find in the one a motive of consolation for the other.

At this moment she heard approaching footsteps and joyous cries. It was the little family returning from church. Two little girls and a young boy bounded into the house. With a more sedate step, but with cordial interest depicted on his countenance, the master of the house then entered. He was, if we have not yet said so, the tailor of the village; a man who knew how to read, who had, in fact, read more than once Il Leggendario de' Santi, and I Reali di Francia, and who passed among his fellow-villagers as a man of talent and learning. With all this, he was the best-tempered creature in the world. Having been present when his wife was requested by the curate to undertake her charitable journey, he had not only given his approbation, but would also have added his persuasion, had it been necessary.

"See, there she is!" said his good wife, as he entered, pointing to Lucia, who blushed, and rose from her seat, beginning to stammer forth some apology. But he, advancing toward her, interrupted her excuses, congratulating her on her safety, and exclaiming: "Welcome, welcome! You are the blessing of Heaven in this house."

Presently the curate of the village entered, and said

that he was sent by the Cardinal to inquire after Lucia, and to inform her that his Grace wished to see her some time during the day; and then, in his Lordship's name, he returned many thanks to the worthy couple. Surprised and agitated, the three could scarcely finds words to reply to such messages from so great a personage.

'And your mother hasn't yet arrived?" said the curate to Lucia.

"My mother!" exclaimed Lucia. Then hearing from him how he had sent to fetch her by the order and suggestion of the Archbishop, she drew her apron over her eyes, and gave way to a flood of tears, which continued to flow for some time after the curate had taken his leave.

Agnese, indeed, while they were talking about her, was but a very little way off. It may easily be imagined how the poor woman felt at this unexpected summons, and at the announcement, necessarily defective and confused, of an escaped but fearful danger—an obscure event, which the messenger could neither circumstantiate nor explain, and of which she had not the slightest ground of explanation in her own previous thoughts. After tearing her hair—after frequent exclamations of "Ah, my God! Ah, Madonna!"—after putting various questions to the messenger which he had not the means of satisfying, she threw herself impetuously into the vehicle, continuing to utter, on her way, numberless ejaculations and useless inquiries. But at a certain point she met Don Abbondio. He stopped; Agnese also stopped and dismounted; and drawing him apart into a chestnut-grove on the roadside, she there learned from Don Abbondio all that he had been able to ascertain and observe. The thing was not clear; but at least Agnese was assured that Lucia was in safety; and she again breathed freely.

After this Don Abbondio tried to introduce another subject, and give her minute instructions as to how she

ought to behave before the Archbishop, if, as was likely, he should wish to see her and her daughter; and, above all, that it would not do to say a word about the wedding. But Agnese, perceiving that he was only speaking for his own interest, cut him short, without promising, indeed without proposing, anything, for she had something else to think about; and immediately resumed her journey.

At length the cart stopped at the tailor's house. Lucia sprang up hastily; Agnese dismounted and rushed impetuously into the cottage, and, in an instant, they were locked in each other's arms. The good dame tried to encourage and calm them, and shared with them in their joy; then, with her usual discretion, she left them, saying that she would go and prepare a bed for them.

The first burst of sobs and embraces being over, Agnese longed to hear Lucia's adventures, and the latter began, mournfully, to relate them. But, as the reader is aware, it was a history which no one knew fully; and to Lucia herself there were some obscure passages, which were, in fact, quite inextricable: more particularly the fatal coincidence of that terrible carriage being in the road, just when Lucia was passing on an extraordinary occasion. On this point, both mother and daughter were lost in conjecture, without ever hitting the mark, or even approaching the real cause.

As to the principal author of the plot, neither one nor the other could for a moment doubt that it was Don Rodrigo.

"Ah, the black villain!" exclaimed Agnese; "but his hour will come. God will reward him according to his works; and then he, too, will feel"—

"No, no, mother; no!" interrupted Lucia; "don't predict suffering for him; don't predict it to anyone! If you knew what it was to suffer! If you had tried it! No, no! rather let us pray God and the Madonna for

him: that God will touch his heart, as he has touched that of this other poor Signor, who was worse than he, and is now a saint."

The shuddering horror that Lucia felt in retracing such recent and cruel scenes, made her more than once pause in the midst; more than once she said she had not courage to go on; and, after many tears, with difficulty resumed her account. But a different feeling checked her at a certain point of the narration—at the mention of the vow. The fear of being blamed by her mother as imprudent and precipitate; or that, as in the affair of the wedding, she should bring forward one of her broad rules of conscience, and try to make it prevail; or that, poor woman she should tell it to some one in confidence, if nothing else, to obtain light and counsel, and thus make it publicly known, from the bare idea of which Lucia shrank back with insupportable shame; together with a feeling of present shame, an inexplicable repugnance to speak on such a subject; all these things together determined her to maintain absolute silence on this important circumstance, proposing, in her own mind, to open herself first to Father Cristoforo. But what did she feel, when, in inquiring after him, she heard that he was no longer at Pescarenico; that he had been sent to a town far, far away, to a town bearing such and such a name!

"And Renzo?" said Agnese.

"He's in safety, isn't he?" said Lucia, hastily.

"That much is certain, because everybody says so."

"Ah, if he's in safety, the Lord be praised!" said Lucia.

This holy prelate, having returned from church, and having heard from the Unnamed of Lucia's safe arrival, had sat down to dinner, placing his new friend on his right hand.

Dinner being removed, the two again withdrew together. After a conversation, which lasted much longer

than the first, the Unnamed set off anew for his castle, and the Cardinal, calling the priest of the parish, told him that he wished to be guided to the house where Lucia had found shelter.

"Oh, my Lord!" replied the parish priest, "allow me, and I will send directly to bid the young girl come here, with her mother, if she has arrived, and their hosts too, if my Lord wishes—indeed all that your illustrious Grace desires to see."

"I wish to go myself to see them," replied Federigo.

"There's no necessity for your illustrious Lordship to give yourself that trouble; I will send directly to fetch them: it's very quickly done," insisted the persevering spoiler of his plans, not comprehending that the Cardinal wished by this visit to do honor at once to the unfortunate girl, to innocence, to hospitality, and to his own ministry. But the superior having again expressed the same desire, the inferior bowed, and led the way.

Agnese and Lucia heard an increasing murmur in the street, and while wondering what it could be, saw the door thrown open, and admit the purple-clad prelate and the priest of the parish.

"Is this she?" demanded Federigo of the curate; and on receiving a sign in the affirmative, he advanced toward Lucia, who was holding back with her mother, both of them motionless and mute with surprise and bashfulness; but the tone of his voice, the countenance, the behavior, and, above all, the words of Federigo, quickly reanimated them. "Poor girl," he began, "God has permitted you to be put to a great trial; but He has surely shown you that His eye was still over you, that He had not forgotten you. He has restored you in safety, and has made use of you for a great work, to show infinite mercy to one, and to relieve, at the same time, many others."

Here the mistress of the house came into the apart-

ment, and almost at the same moment the tailor made his appearance at another door. Seeing their guests engaged in conversation, they quietly withdrew into one corner, and waited there with profound respect. The Cardinal, having courteously saluted them, continued to talk to the women.

"It would be well if all priests were like your Lordship, if they would sometimes take the part of the poor, and not help to put them into difficulties to get themselves out," said Agnese, emboldened by the kind and affable behavior of Federigo.

"Just say all that you think," said the Cardinal; "speak freely."

"I mean to say, that if our Signor Curato had done his duty, things wouldn't have gone as they have."

But the Cardinal renewing his request that she should explain herself more fully, she began to feel rather perplexed at having to relate a story in which she, too, had borne a part she did not care to make known, especially to such a man. However, she contrived to manage it, with a little curtailment. She related the intended match, and the refusal of Don Abbondio; nor was she silent on the pretext of the superiors which he had brought forward (ah, Agnese!); and then she skipped on to Don Rodrigo's attempt, and how, having been warned of it, they had been able to make their escape. "But, indeed," added she, in conclusion, "we only escaped to be again caught in the snare. If instead, the Signor Curato had honestly told us the whole, and had immediately married my poor children, we would have gone away all together directly, privately, and far enough off, where not even the wind would have known us."

"The Signor Curato shall render me an account of this matter," said the Cardinal.

"Oh, no, Signor, no!" replied Agnese; "I didn't speak on that account: don't scold him; for what is done, is

done; and besides, it will do no good; it is his nature; and on another occasion he would do just the same."

But Lucia, dissatisfied with this way of relating the story, added: "We also have done wrong: it shows it was not the Lord's will that the plan should succeed."

"What can you have done wrong, my poor girl?" asked Federigo.

And, in spite of the threatening glances which her mother tried to give her secretly, Lucia, in her turn, related the history of their attempt in Don Abbondio's house; and concluded by saying, "We have done wrong, and God has punished us for it."

"Take, as from His hand, the sufferings you have undergone, and be of good courage," said Federigo; "for who have reason to rejoice and be hopeful, but those who have suffered, and are ready to accuse themselves?"

He then asked where was her betrothed; and hearing from Agnese (Lucia stood silent, with her head bent, and downcast eyes) how he had been outlawed, he felt and expressed surprise and dissatisfaction, and asked why it was.

Agnese stammered out what little she knew of Renzo's history.

"I have heard of this youth," said the good Cardinal; "but how happens it that a man involved in affairs of this sort is in treaty of marriage with this young girl?"

"He was a worthy youth," said Lucia, blushing, but in a firm voice.

"He was even too quiet a lad," added Agnese; "and you may ask this of anybody you like, even of the Signor Curato. Who knows what confusion they may have made down there, what intrigues? It takes little to make poor people seem rogues."

"Indeed, it's too true," said the Cardinal; "I'll certainly make inquiries about him;" and learning the name and residence of the youth, he made a memorandum of them

on his tablets. He added that he expected to be at their village in a few days, that then Lucia might go thither without fear, and that, in the mean while, he would think about providing her some secure retreat, till everything was arranged for the best.

Then the Cardinal took his leave, saying, "The blessing of God be upon this house."

CHAPTER XXV

A NEW FRIEND

NEXT day no one was spoken of in Lucia's village and throughout the whole territory of Lecco, but herself, the Unnamed, the Archbishop, and one other person, who, however ambitious to have his name in men's mouths, would willingly, on this occasion, have dispensed with the honor: we mean the Signor Don Rodrigo.

Not that his doings had not before been talked about; but they were detached, secret conversations; and that man must have been very well acquainted with his neighbor who would have ventured to discourse with him freely on such a subject. But now, who could refrain from inquiring and reasoning about so notorious an event, in which the hand of Heaven had been seen, and in which two such personages bore a conspicuous part? By the side of these rivals, Don Rodrigo looked rather insignificant. Now, all understood what it was to torment innocence with the wish to dishonor it; to persecute it with such insolent perseverance, with such atrocious violence, with such abominable treachery. There were whisperings and general murmurs; cautiously uttered, however, on account of the numberless bravoes he had around him.

Don Rodrigo, astounded at this unlooked-for news, re-

mained ensconced in his den-like palace, with no one to keep him company but his bravoes, devouring his rage, for two days, and on the third set off for Milan. Had there been nothing else but the murmuring of the people, perhaps, since things had gone so far, he would have stayed on purpose to face it, or even to seek an opportunity of making an example to others of one of the most daring; but the certain intelligence that the Cardinal was coming into the neighborhood fairly drove him away.

In the mean while, the Cardinal proceeded on his visitation among the parishes in the territory of Lecco, taking one each day. On the day on which he was to arrive at Lucia's village, a large part of the inhabitants were early on the road to meet him. Toward evening all who had remained within doors, old men, women, and children, for the most part, set off to meet him, some in procession, some in groups, headed by Don Abbondio, who, in the midst of the rejoicing, looked disconsolate enough, with a secret apprehension that the women might have been "blabbing," and that he would be called upon to render an account of the wedding.

At length the Cardinal came in sight, or, to speak more correctly, the crowd in the midst of which he was carried in his litter, surrounded by his attendants; for nothing could be distinguished of his whole party but a signal towering in the air above the heads of the people, part of the cross, which was borne by the chaplain, mounted upon his mule.

The holy prelate advanced slowly, bestowing benedictions with his hand, and receiving them from the mouths of the multitude, while his followers had enough to do to keep their places behind him.

He entered the church as best he could, went up to the altar, and thence, after a short prayer, addressed, as was his custom, a few words to his auditors, of his affection for them, his desire for their salvation, and the way in

which they ought to prepare themselves for the services of the morrow. Then retiring to the parsonage, among many other things he had to consult about with the curate, he questioned him as to the character and conduct of Renzo. Don Abbondio said that he was rather a brisk, obstinate, hot-headed fellow. But on more particular and precise interrogations, he was obliged to admit that he was a worthy youth, and that he himself could not understand how he could have played all the mischievous tricks at Milan that had been reported.

"And about the young girl," resumed the Cardinal; "do you think she may now return in security to her own home?"

"For the present," replied Don Abbondio, "she might come and be as safe—the present, I say—as she wishes; but," added he with a sigh, "your illustrious Lordship ought to be always here, or, at least, near at hand."

"The Lord is always near," said the Cardinal; "as to the rest, I will think about placing her in safety." And he hastily gave orders that early next morning a litter should be despatched with an attendant to fetch the two women.

Don Abbondio came out from the interview quite delighted that the Cardinal had talked to him about the two young people, without requiring an account of his refusal to marry them.—Then he knows nothing about it, said he; Agnese has held her tongue. Wonderful! They have to see him again; but I will give them further instructions, that I will.—He knew not, poor man, that Federigo had not entered upon the discussion because he intended to speak to him about it more at length when they were disengaged; and that he wished, before giving him what he deserved, to hear his side of the question.

The two women, during the few days which they had to pass in the tailor's hospitable dwelling, had resumed, as far as they could, each her former and accustomed

manner of living. Lucia had very soon begged some employment; and, as at the monastery, diligently plied her needle in a small retired room shut out from the gaze of the people.

A few miles from this village resided, at their country-house, a couple of some importance, Don Ferrante and Donna Prassede: their family, as usual, is not named by our anonymous author. Donna Prassede was an old lady, very much inclined to do good, the most praiseworthy employment certainly that a person can undertake; but which like every other can be too easily abused. She acted toward her ideas as it is said one ought to do toward one's friends; she had few of them; but to those few she was very much attached.

On hearing Lucia's wonderful case, and all that was reported on this occasion of the young girl, she felt a great curiosity to see her, and sent a carriage, with an aged attendant, to fetch both mother and daughter.

When they had arrived in the lady's presence, she received them with much courtesy and numberless congratulations; questioning and advising them with a kind of assumption of superiority, but corrected by so many humble expressions, tempered by so much interest in their behalf, and sweetened with so many expressions of piety, that Agnese, almost immediately, and Lucia, not long afterward, began to feel relieved from the oppressive sense of awe which the presence of such a lady had inspired them; nay, they even found something attractive in it. In short, hearing that the Cardinal had undertaken to find Lucia a place of retreat, and urged by a desire to second, and at the same time anticipate his good intention, Donna Prassede proposed to take the young girl into her own house, where no other services would be required of her than the use of her needle, scissors, and spindle; adding that she would take upon herself the charge of informing his Lordship.

Beyond the obvious and immediate good in this work, Donna Prassede saw in it, and proposed to herself, another, perhaps a more considerable one in her ideas, that of directing a young mind, and of bringing into the right way one who greatly needed it; for, from the first moment she had heard Lucia mentioned, she became instantly persuaded that in a young girl who could have promised herself to a scoundrel, a villain, in short, a scape-gallows, there must be some fault, some hidden wickedness lurking within. She held it for certain, as if she knew it on good grounds, that all Lucia's misfortunes were a chastisement from Heaven for her attachment to a rascal, and a warning to her to give him up.

The mother and daughter looked at each other. Considering the mournful necessity of their separating, the offer seemed to both of them most acceptable. Seeing assent exhibited in each other's eyes, they both turned to Donna Prassede with such acknowledgments as expressed their acceptance of her proposal. She renewed her kind affability and promises, and said that they should shortly have a letter to present to his Lordship. After the women had taken their departure, she got Don Ferrante to compose the letter. Donna Prassede copied it very diligently, and then despatched the letter to the tailor's. This was two or three days before the Cardinal sent the litter to convey the two women home.

Arriving at the village before the Cardinal had gone to church, they alighted at the curate's house. There was an order to admit them immediately: the chaplain, who was the first to see them, executed the order, only detaining them so long as was necessary to school them very hastily in the ceremonials they ought to observe toward his Lordship.

The Cardinal was at this moment busily talking with Don Abbondio on some parish matters: so that the latter had not the desired opportunity of giving his instructions

also to the women. He could only bestow upon them in passing, as he withdrew and they came forward, a glance which meant to say how well-pleased he was with them, and conjuring them, like good creatures, to continue silent.

After the first kind greetings on one hand, and the first reverent salutations on the other, Agnese drew the letter from her bosom, and handed it to the Cardinal, saying: "It is from the Signora Donna Prassede, who says she knows your most illustrious Lordship well, my Lord; it's natural enough among such great people that they should know each other. When you have read it, you'll see."

"Very well," said Federigo, when he had read the letter, and extracted the honey from Don Ferrante's flowers of rhetoric. He knew the family well enough to feel certain that Lucia had been invited thither with good intentions, and that there she would be secure from the machinations and violence of her persecutor.

"Take this separation also, and the uncertainty in which you are placed, calmly," added he; "trust that it will soon be over, and that God will bring matters to that end to which He seems to have directed them; but rest assured, that whatever He wills shall happen, will be best for you."

When the bells began to ring, announcing the approach of the hour for divine service, everybody moved toward the church, and to our newly-returned friends it was a second triumphal march.

Service being over, Don Abbondio, who had hastened forward to see if Perpetua had everything well arranged for dinner, was informed that the Cardinal wished to speak with him. He went immediately to his noble guest's apartment, who, waiting till he drew near: "Signor Curato," he began—and these words were uttered in such a way as to convey the idea that they were the preface to a long and serious conversation—'Signor Cu-

rato, why did you not unite in marriage this Lucia with her betrothed husband?"

—Those people have emptied the sack this morning, thought Don Abbondio, as he stammered: "Your most illustrious Lordship will, doubtless, have heard speak of the confusions which have arisen out of this affair: it has all been so intricate, that, to this very day, one can not see one's way clearly in it: as your illustrious Lordship may yourself conclude from this, that the young girl is here, after so many accidents, as it were by miracle; and that the bridegroom, after other accidents, is nobody knows where."

"I ask," replied the Cardinal, "whether it is true that, before all these circumstances took place, you refused to celebrate the marriage, when you were requested to do so, on the appointed day; and if so, why?"

"Really, if your illustrious Lordship knew what intimations, what terrible injunctions I have received, not to speak"— And he paused without concluding, with a certain manner intended respectfully to insinuate that it would be indiscreet to wish to know more.

"But," said the Cardinal, with a voice and look much more serious than usual, "it is your Bishop who, for his own duty's sake, and for your justification, wishes to learn from you why you have not done what, in your regular duties, you were bound to do?"

"My Lord," said Don Abbondio, shrinking almost into a nutshell, "I did not like to say before, but it seemed to me that, things being so entangled, so long gone by, and now irremediable, it was useless to bring them up again. However, I know your illustrious Lordship will not betray one of your poor priests. For you see, my Lord, your illustrious Lordship can not be everywhere at once; and I remain here exposed. But, when you command it, I will tell you all."

"Tell me: I only wish to find you free from blame."

Don Abbondio then began to relate the doleful history; but suppressing the principal name, he merely substituted a "great Signor;" thus giving to prudence the little that he could in such an emergency.

"And you had no other motive?" asked the Cardinal, having attentively heard the whole.

"Perhaps I have not sufficiently explained myself," replied Don Abbondio. "I was prohibited, under pain of death, from performing this marriage."

"And does this appear to you a sufficient reason for omitting a positive duty?"

"I have always endeavored to do my duty, even at very great inconvenience; but when one's life is concerned"—

"And when you presented yourself to the Church," said Federigo, in a still more solemn tone, "to receive Holy Orders, did she caution you about your life? Did she tell you that the duties belonging to the ministry were free from every obstacle, exempt from every danger, or did she tell you that where danger begins duty would end? Did she not expressly say the contrary? Did she not warn you, that she sent you forth as a sheep among wolves? Did you not know that there are violent oppressors, to whom what you are commanded to perform would be displeasing? He from Whom we have received teaching and example, in imitation of Whom we suffer ourselves to be called, and call ourselves, shepherds; when He descended upon earth to execute His office, did He lay down as a condition the safety of His life? And to save it, to preserve it, I say, a few days longer upon earth, at the expense of charity and duty, did He institute the holy unction, the imposition of hands, the gift of the priesthood?"

Don Abbondio hung his head. His mind during these arguments was like a chicken in the talons of a hawk, which holds its prey elevated to an unknown region, to an atmosphere it has never before breathed. Finding

that he must make some reply, he said in a tone of unconvinced submission: "My Lord, I am to blame. When one is not to consider one's life, I don't know what to say. But when one has to do with some people, people who possess power, and won't hear reason, I don't see what is to be gained by it, even if one were willing to play the bravo. This Signor is one whom it is impossible either to conquer or to win over."

"And don't you know that suffering for righteousness' sake is our conquest? If you know not this, what do you preach? What are you teacher of? Who requires from you that you should conquer force by force? Surely you will not one day be asked if you were able to overcome the powerful; for for this purpose neither your mission nor rule was given to you. But you will assuredly be demanded, whether you employed the means you possessed to do what was required of you, even when they had the temerity to prohibit you."

—These saints are very odd, thought Don Abbondio meanwhile:—in substance, to extract the plain meaning, he has more at heart the affections of two young people than the life of a poor priest.—And he would have been very well satisfied had the conversation ended here; but he saw the Cardinal, at every pause, wait with the air of one who expects a reply.

"I repeat, my Lord," answered he, therefore, "that I am to blame, but one can't give oneself courage."

"And why, then, I might ask you, did you undertake an office which binds upon you a continual warfare with the passions of the world? But I will rather say, how is it you do not remember that, if in this ministry, however you may have been placed there, courage is necessary to fulfil your obligations, there is One who will infallibly bestow it upon you, when you ask Him? Now, surely, if you loved those who have been committed to your spiritual care, those whom you call children, when

you saw two of them threatened, as well as yourself, as the weakness of the flesh made you tremble for yourself, so love would have made you tremble for them. A holy and noble fear for others, for your children, you would have listened to; this would have incited—constrained you to think and do all you could to avert the dangers that threatened them. With what has this fear, this love, inspired you? What have you done for them? What have you thought for them?"

And he ceased, in token of expectation.

CHAPTER XXVI

DON ABBONDIO ON THE RACK

AT such a question, Don Abbondio, who had been studying to find some reply in the least precise terms possible, stood without uttering a word. "You give me no answer!" resumed the Cardinal. "Ah, if you had done, on your part, what charity and duty required of you, however things had turned out, you would now have something to answer! You see, then, yourself what you have done. You have obeyed the voice of Iniquity, unmindful of the requirements of duty. You have transgressed, and kept silence. I ask you, now, whether you have not done more?—you will tell me whether it be true that you alleged false pretexts for your refusal, that you might not reveal the true motive."

—The tell-tales have reported this too, thought Don Abbondio; but as he gave no token in words of having anything to say, the Cardinal continued: "If it be true, then, that you told these poor people what was not the case, to keep them in the ignorance and darkness in which iniquity wished them to be, it only remains for me to blush for it with you, and to hope that you will weep for

it with me! See, then, to what this solicitude for your temporal life has led you! It has led you to deceive the weak, to lie to your own children."

—Just see how things go! thought Don Abbondio:—to that fiend—meaning the Unnamed—his arms around his neck; and to me, for a half-lie, uttered for the sole purpose of saving my life, all this fuss and noise.—Speaking aloud, he said: "I have done wrong; I see that I've done wrong; but what could I do in an extremity of that kind?"

"Do you still ask this? Have not I told you already? Must I tell you again? You should have loved, my son; loved and prayed. Then you would have felt that iniquity may indeed have threats to employ, blows to bestow, but not commands to give; you would have united, according to the law of God, those whom man wished to put asunder; you would have extended toward these unhappy innocents the ministry they had a right to claim from you: God Himself would have been surety for the consequences. But even without this, did you not remember that you had a superior? How would he have this authority to rebuke you for having been wanting in the duties of your office, did he not feel himself bound to assist you in fulfilling them? Why did you not think of acquainting your bishop with the impediment that infamous violence had placed in the way of the exercise of your ministry?"

—The very advice of Perpetua? thought Don Abbondio, pettishly, who, in the midst of this conversation, had most vividly before his eyes the images of the bravoes, and the thought that Don Rodrigo was still alive and well, and that he would some day or other be returning in glory and triumph, and furious with revenge.

"Why did you not remember," pursued the bishop, "that if there were no other retreat open to these betrayed innocents, I at least was ready to receive them,

and put them in safety, had you directed them to me? And as to yourself, I should not have slept till I was sure that not a hair of your head would be injured. Do you think I had not the means of securing your life? Didn't you know that if men too often promise more than they can perform, so they not unfrequently threaten more than they would attempt to execute? Didn't you know that iniquity depends not only on its own strength, but often also on the fears and credulity of others?"

—Just Perpetua's arguments! again thought Don Abbondio.

"But you," said the Cardinal, in conclusion, "saw nothing, and would see nothing, but your own temporal danger; what wonder that it seemed to you sufficient to outweigh every other consideration?"

"It was because I myself saw those terrible faces," escaped from Don Abbondio in reply; "I myself heard their words. Your illustrious Lordship can talk very well; but you ought to be in a poor priest's shoes, and find yourself brought to the point."

No sooner, however, had he uttered these words, than he bit his tongue with vexation; he saw that he had allowed himself to be too much carried away by petulance, and said to himself—Now comes the storm! But raising his eyes doubtfully, he was astonished to see the countenance of that man, whom he never could succeed in comprehending, pass from the solemn air of authority and rebuke to a sorrowful gravity.

"'Tis too true!" said Federigo; "such is our miserable and terrible condition. We must rigorously exact from others what God only knows whether we should be ready to yield; we must judge, correct, reprove; and God knows what we ourselves should do in the same circumstances, what we actually have done in similar ones! Well, then, my son, my brother; as the errors of those in authority are often better known to others than to them-

selves; if you are aware of my having, from pusillanimity, or from any other motive, failed in any part of my duty, tell me of it candidly, and help me to amend. Remonstrate freely with me on my weakness; and then my words will acquire more value in my mouth, because you will feel more vividly that they are not mine, but are the words of Him who can give both to you and me the necessary strength to do what they prescribe."

—Oh, what a holy man! but what a tormentor! thought Don Abbondio—he doesn't even spare himself: that I should examine, interfere with, criticise, and even accuse himself!—He then said: "Oh, my Lord, you are joking with me! Who does not know the fortitude of mind, the intrepid zeal of your illustrious Lordship?"

"I did not ask you for praise, which makes me tremble," said Federigo; " for God knows my failings, and what I know of them myself is enough to confound me; but I wished that we should humble ourselves together before Him, that we might depend upon Him together. I would, for your own sake, that you should feel how your conduct has been, and your language still is, opposed to the law you nevertheless preach, and according to which you will be judged."

"All falls upon me," said Don Abbondio; "but these people who have told you all this, didn't, probably, tell you, too, of their having introduced themselves treacherously into my house, to take me by surprise, and to contract a marriage contrary to the laws."

"They did tell me, my son: but it is this that grieves, that depresses me, to see you still anxious to excuse yourself; still thinking to excuse yourself by accusing others; still accusing others of what ought to make part of your own confession. Who placed them, I don't say under the necessity, but under the temptation, to do what they have done? Would they have sought this irregular method, had not the legitimate one been closed against

them? Would they have thought of snaring their pastor, had they been received to his arms, assisted, advised by him? or of surprising him, had he not concealed himself? And do you lay the blame upon them? And are you indignant, because, after so many misfortunes—what do I say? in the midst of misfortune—they have said a word or two, to give vent to their sorrows, to their and your pastor? Ah, if they have provoked, offended, annoyed you, I would say to you, love them exactly for that reason. Love them, because they have suffered, because they still suffer, because they are yours, because they are weak, because you have need of pardon, to obtain which, think of what efficacy their prayer may be."

Don Abbondio was silent, but it was no longer an unconvinced and scornful silence: it was that of one who has more things to think about than to say. The words he had heard were unexpected consequences, novel applications, of a doctrine he had nevertheless long believed in his heart, without a thought of disputing it. The misfortunes of others now made a new impression upon him. And if he did not feel all the contrition which the address was intended to produce, yet he felt it in some degree. He would have accused himself bitterly, he would even have wept, had it not been for the thought of Don Rodrigo; and, as it was, he betrayed sufficient emotion to convince the Cardinal that his words had not been entirely without effect.

"I will not fail, my Lord, I will not fail, I assure you," replied Don Abbondio, in a tone that showed it came from the heart.

"Ah yes, my son, yes!" exclaimed Federigo; and with a dignity full of affection, he concluded: "Heaven knows how I should have wished to hold a different conversation with you. God grant that the language which I have been compelled to use may be of use to us both. You would not wish that He should call me to account

at the last day, for having countenanced you in a course of conduct in which you have so unhappily fallen short of your duty. Let us redeem the time; the hour of midnight is at hand; the Bridegroom can not tarry; let us, therefore, keep our lamps burning. Let us offer our hearts, miserable and empty as they are, to God that He may be pleased to fill them with that charity which amends the past, which is a pledge of the future, which fears and trusts, weeps and rejoices, with true wisdom; which becomes in every instance, the virtue of which we stand in need."

So saying, he left the room, followed by Don Abbondio.

The next morning Donna Prassede came, according to agreement, to fetch Lucia and to pay her respects to the Cardinal, who spoke in high terms of the young girl, and recommended her warmly to the Signora.

The Cardinal was himself just starting for another parish, when the curate of that in which the castle of the Unnamed was situated, arrived, and requested to speak to him. On being admitted, he presented a packet and a letter from that nobleman, wherein he besought Federigo to prevail upon Lucia's mother to accept a hundred scudi of gold, which were contained in the parcel, to serve either as a dowry for the young girl, or for any other use which the two women might deem more suitable; requesting him at the same time to tell them, that if ever, on any occasion, they thought he could render them any service, the poor girl knew too well where he lived; and that, for him, this would be one of the most desirable events that could happen. The Cardinal immediately sent for Agnese, who listened with equal pleasure and amazement to the courteous message, and suffered the packet to be put into her hand without much scrupulous ceremony. "May God reward this Signor for it," said she; "and will your illustrious Lordship thank him very kindly? And don't say a word about it to any-

body, because this is a kind of country—Excuse me, Sir; I know very well that a gentleman like you won't chatter about these things; but—you understand me."

Home she went as quickly as possible; shut herself up in her room, unwrapped the parcel, and, however prepared by anticipation, beheld with astonishment those coins all her own, of which she had, perhaps, never seen more than one at a time before, and that but seldom. By daybreak she arose, and set off in good time toward the villa where her daughter was residing.

Though Lucia's extreme reluctance to speak of her vow was in no degree diminished, she had, on her part, resolved to force herself to open her mind to her mother in this interview.

Hardly were they left alone, when Agnese, with a look full of animation, and at the same time, in a suppressed tone, as if some one were present who she was afraid would hear, began, "I've a grand thing to tell you;" and proceeded to relate her unexpected good fortune.

"God bless this Signor!" said Lucia; "now you have enough to be well off yourself, and you can also do good to others."

"Why!" replied Agnese, "don't you see how many things we may do with so much money? Listen; I have nobody but you—but you two, I may say; for, from the time that he began to address you, I have always considered Renzo as my son. The whole depends upon whether any misfortune has happened to him, seeing he gives no sign of being alive: but oh! surely all won't go ill with us? Do you understand, now? The little sum that the poor fellow had been barely able to lay by, with all his frugality, the law came, and cleared it away; but the Lord has sent us a fortune to make up for it. Well, when he has found a way of letting us know that he's alive, where he is, and what are his intentions, I'll come to Milan and fetch you. Once upon a time, I should have

thought twice about such a thing, but misfortunes make one experienced and independent; I've gone as far as Monza, and know what it is to travel. I'll bring with me a proper companion—a relative, as I may say—Alessio, of Maggianico; for, to say the truth, a fit person isn't to be found in the country at all. I'll come with him; we will pay the expense, and—do you understand?"

But perceiving that, instead of cheering up, Lucia became more and more dejected, and only exhibited emotion unmixed with pleasure, she stopped abruptly in the midst of her speech and said: "But what's the matter with you?"

"Poor mamma!" exclaimed Lucia, throwing her arm round her neck and burying her weeping face in her bosom.

"What is the matter?" again asked her mother, anxiously.

"I ought to have told you at first," said Lucia, raising her head, and composing herself, "but I never had the heart to do it: pity me!"

But tell me, then, now."

"I can no longer be that poor fellow's betrothed!"

"How? how?"

With head hung down, a beating heart, and tears rolling down her cheeks, Lucia disclosed her vow.

Agnese was stupefied with consternation. She would have been angry with her for her silence, but the more serious thoughts the case itself aroused stifled this personal vexation. After a few moments of astonishment, she said, "And what will you do now?"

"Now," replied Lucia, "it is the Lord who must think for us; the Lord, and the Madonna. I have placed myself in their hands; they have not forsaken me hitherto; they will not forsake me now."

"And Renzo?" said Agnese, shaking her head.

"Ah!" exclaimed Lucia, with a sudden start, "I must

think no more of that poor fellow. Long ago God had destined—See how it appears that it was His will we should be kept asunder. And who knows? But no, no! the Lord will have preserved him from danger, and will make him even happier without me."

"But now, you see," replied Agnese, "if it were not that you are bound for ever, if no misfortune has happened to Renzo, I might have found a remedy with so much money."

"But should we have got this money," replied Lucia, "if I had not passed through such a night? It is the Lord who has ordered everything as it is; His will be done."

At this unexpected argument, Agnese remained silent and thoughtful. In a few moments, however, Lucia, suppressing her sobs, resumed: "Now that the deed is done, we must submit to it with cheerfulness; and you can help me, first by praying to the Lord for your unhappy daughter, and then—that poor fellow must be told of it, you know. Will you see to this, and do me also this kindness? When you can find out where he is, get some one to write to him; tell him where I have been, how I have suffered, and that God has willed it should be thus; that he must set his heart at rest, and that I can never, never be anybody's wife! And tell him of it in a kind and clever way; explain to him that I have promised, that I have really made a vow. When he knows that I have promised the Madonna—And the moment you have any news of him, get somebody to write to me; let me know that he is well, and then let me never hear anything more."

Agnese, with much feeling, assured her daughter that everything should be done as she desired.

"There's one thing more I have to say," resumed Lucia; "this poor fellow—if he hadn't had the misfortune to think of me, all that has happened to him never would have happened. He's a wanderer in the wide world;

they've ruined him on setting out in life; they've carried away all he had, all those little savings he had made, poor fellow; you know why. And we have so much money! Oh, mother! as the Lord has sent us so much wealth, and you look upon this poor fellow, true enough, as belonging to you—yes, as your son—oh! divide it between you; for, most assuredly, God won't let us want. Look out for the opportunity of a safe bearer, and send it him; for Heaven knows how much he wants it!"

"Yes, certainly!" replied Agnese; "I'll do it, indeed. Poor youth!"

Lucia thanked her mother for her ready and liberal assent, with such deep gratitude and affection as would have convinced an observer that her heart still secretly clung to Renzo.

After long and renewed embraces, the women tore themselves apart, promising, by turns, to see each other the next autumn.

Meanwhile, a considerable time passed away, and Agnese could hear no tidings of Renzo. Neither letter nor message could reach her from him; and among all those whom she could ask from Bergamo, or the neighborhood, no one knew anything at all about him.

Nor was she the only one who made inquiries in vain: Cardinal Federigo, who had not told the poor woman merely out of compliment that he would seek for some information concerning the unfortunate man, had, in fact, immediately written to obtain it. Having returned to Milan after his visitation, he received a reply, in which he was informed that the address of the person he had named could not be ascertained; that he had certainly made some stay in such a place, where he had given no occasion for any talk about himself; but that, one morning, he had suddenly disappeared; that a relative of his, with whom he had lodged there, knew not what had become of him, and could only repeat certain vague and

contradictory rumors which were afloat, that the youth had enlisted for the Levant, had passed into Germany or had perished in fording a river.

These, and various other reports, at length spread throughout the territory of Lecco, and consequently reached the ears of Agnese. The poor woman did her utmost to discover which was the true account, and to arrive at the origin of this and that rumor; but she never succeeded. Sometimes she had hardly heard one tale, when some one would come and tell her not a word of it was true; only, however, to give her another in compensation, equally strange and disastrous. The truth is, all these rumors were alike unfounded.

The Governor of Milan, and Captain-General in Italy, Don Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova, had complained bitterly to the Venetian minister, resident at Milan, because a rogue and public robber, a promoter of plundering and massacre, the famous Lorenzo Tramaglino, who, while in the very hands of justice, had excited an insurrection to force his escape, had been received and harbored in the Bergamascan territory. The minister in residence replied, that he knew nothing about it; he would write to Venice, that he might be able to give his Excellency any explanation that could be procured on the subject.

It was a maxim of Venetian policy to second and cultivate the inclination of Milanese silk-weavers to emigrate into the Bergamascan territory. As, however, when two great diplomatists dispute, in however trifling a matter, third parties must always have a taste in the shape of consequences, Bortolo was warned, in confidence, that Renzo was not safe in that neighborhood, and that he would do wisely to place him in some other manufactory for a while, even under a false name. Bortolo understood the hint, raised no objections, explained the matter to his cousin, took him with him in a carriage, con-

veyed him to another new silk-mill about fifteen miles off, and presented him, under the name of Antonio Rivolta, to the owner, who was a native of the Milanese, and an old acquaintance.

Soon after, an order came from Venice, to the sheriff of Bergamo, requiring him to obtain and forward information, whether, in his jurisdiction, and more expressly in such a village, such an individual was to be found. The sheriff, having made the necessary researches in the manner he saw was desired, transmitted a reply in the negative, which was transmitted to the minister at Milan, who despatched it to Don Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova.

There were not wanting inquisitive people who tried to learn from Bortolo why this youth was no longer with him, and where he had gone. To the first inquiry he replied, "Nay, he has disappeared!" but afterward, to get rid of the most pertinacious without giving them a suspicion of what was really the case, he contrived to entertain them, some with one, some with another, of the stories we have before mentioned.

But when inquiries came to be made of him by commission from the Cardinal, without mentioning his name, merely giving him to understand that it was in the name of a great personage, Bortolo became the more guarded, and deemed it the more necessary to adhere to his general method of reply; nay, as a great personage was concerned, he gave out by wholesale all the stories which he had published, one by one, of his various disasters.

Let it not be imagined that such a person as Don Gonzalo bore any personal enmity to the poor mountain silk-weaver. Don Gonzalo had too many and too important affairs in his head to trouble himself about Renzo's doings; and if it seems that he did trouble himself about them, it arose from a singular combination of circumstances, by which the poor unfortunate fellow, without

desiring it, and without being aware of it, either then, or even afterward, found himself linked, as by a subtle and invisible chain, to these same important affairs.

CHAPTER XXVII

NEWS FROM RENZO

WE have already mentioned the war that was at this time raging, for the succession to the states of the Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga, the second of that name. For the due understanding of our narrative, a more particular notice of it is required.

On the death of this duke, the first in the line of succession, Carlo Gonzaga, head of a younger branch now established in France, where he possessed the duchies of Nevers and Rhetel, had entered upon the possession of Mantua and of Monferrat. The Spanish minister, who was resolved at any compromise to exclude the new prince from these two fiefs, and who, to exclude him, wanted some pretext, had declared himself upholder of the claims which another Gonzaga Ferrante, Prince of Guastalla, pretended to have upon Mantua, and Carlo Emanuele I, Duke of Savoy, and Margherita Gonzaga, Duchess Dowager of Lorraine, upon Monferrat. Don Gonzalo, who was of the family of the great commander, and bore his name, who had already made war in Flanders, and was extremely anxious to bring one into Italy, was perhaps the person who made most stir that this might be undertaken: and in the meanwhile, interpreting the intentions, and anticipating the orders, of the above-named minister, he concluded a treaty with the Duke of Savoy for the invasion and partition of Monferrat; and afterward readily obtained a ratification of it from the Count Duke, by

persuading him that the acquisition of Casale would be very easy, which was the most strongly defended point of the portion assigned to the King of Spain. He protested, however, in the King's name, against any intention of occupying the country further than under the name of a deposit, until the sentence of the Emperor should be declared; who, partly from the influence of others, partly from private motives of his own, had, in the meanwhile, denied the investiture to the new Duke, and intimated to him that he should give up to him in sequestration the controverted states: afterward, having heard the different sides, he would restore them to him who had the best claim. To these conditions the Duke of Nevers would not consent.

He had, however, friends of some eminence in the Cardinal de Richelieu, the Venetian noblemen, and the Pope. But the first of these, at that time engaged in the siege of La Rochelle, and in a war with England, and thwarted by the party of the queen-mother, Maria de' Medici, who, for certain reasons of her own, was opposed to the house of Nevers, could give nothing but hopes. The Venetians would not stir, nor even declare themselves in his favor, unless a French army were first brought into Italy; and while secretly aiding the Duke as best they could, they contented themselves with putting off the Court of Madrid and the Governor of Milan with protests, propositions, and peaceable or threatening admonitions, according to circumstances. Urban VIII recommended Nevers to his friends, interceded in his favor with his enemies, and designed projects of accommodation; but would not hear a word of sending men into the field.

By this means the two confederates for offensive measures were enabled the more securely to begin their concerted operations. Carlo Emanuele invaded Monferrat from his side; Don Gonzalo willingly laid siege to Casale, but did not find in the undertaking all the satisfaction

he had promised himself. The Court did not provide him with the means he demanded; his ally, on the contrary, assisted him too much: that is to say, after taking his own portion, he took that which was assigned to the King of Spain. Don Gonzalo was enraged beyond expression; but fearing that, if he made any noise about it, this duke, as active in intrigues and fickle in treaty as bold and valiant in arms, would revolt to the French, he was obliged to shut his eyes to it, and put on a satisfied air. In the midst of these perplexities, the news of the sedition at Milan arrived, to the scene of which Don Gonzalo repaired in person.

Here, in the report given him, mention was made of the rebellious and clamorous flight of Renzo, and of the real or supposed doings which had been the occasion of his arrest; and they informed him that this person had taken refuge in the territory of Bergamo. This circumstance arrested Don Gonzalo's attention. He had been informed from another quarter that great interest had been felt at Venice in the insurrection at Milan; that they had supposed he would be obliged on this account to abandon the siege of Casale; and that they imagined he was reduced to great despondency and perplexity about it: the more so, as shortly after this event, the tidings had arrived, so much desired by these noblemen, and dreaded by himself, of the surrender of La Rochelle. Feeling considerably annoyed, both as a man and a politician, that they should entertain such an opinion of his proceedings, he sought every opportunity of undeceiving them, and persuading them, by induction, that he had lost none of his former boldness.

Accordingly, when the Venetian ambassador waited upon him to pay his respects, Don Gonzalo, after speaking lightly of the tumult, made those complaints about Renzo which the reader already knows, as he is also acquainted with what resulted from them. From that time

he took no further interest in an affair of so little importance, which, as far as he was concerned, was terminated.

But Renzo, who, from the little which he had darkly comprehended, was far from supposing so benevolent an indifference, had, for a time, no other thought, or rather, to speak more correctly, no other care, than to keep himself concealed. It may be imagined whether he did not ardently long to send news of himself to the women, and receive some from them in exchange. But two great difficulties were in the way. One was, that he would have been forced to trust to an amanuensis, for the poor fellow knew not how to write, nor even read, in the broad sense of the word, and would be obliged to make a third party the depositary of his affairs, and of a secret so jealously guarded; the other difficulty was to find a bearer; a man who was going to the right place, who would take charge of the letter, and really recollect to deliver it.

At length, by dint of searching and sounding, he found somebody to write for him; but ignorant where the women were, or whether they were still at Monza, he judged it better to enclose the letter directed to Agnese under cover to Father Cristoforo, with a line or two also for him. The writer undertook the charge, moreover, of forwarding the packet, and delivered it to one who would pass not far from Pescarenico; this person left it, with many strict charges, at an inn on the road, at the nearest point to the monastery; and, as it was directed to a convent, it reached this destination; but what became of it afterward was never known. Renzo, receiving no reply, sent off a second letter, nearly like the first, which he enclosed in another to an acquaintance or distant relative of his at Lecco. He sought for another bearer, and found one; and this time the letter reached the person to whom it was addressed. Agnese posted off to Maggianico, had it read and interpreted to her by her cousin Alessio; concerted with him a reply, which he put down in writing

for her, and found means of sending it to Antonio Rivolta in his present place of abode: all this, however, not quite so expeditiously as we have recounted it. Renzo received the reply, and in time sent an answer to it. In short, a correspondence was set on foot between the two.

The first letter, written in Renzo's name, contained many subjects. Primarily, besides an account of the flight, by far more concise, but, at the same time, more confused, than that which we have given, was a relation of his actual circumstances, from which both Agnese and her interpreter were very far from deriving any lucid or tolerably correct idea. Then he spoke of secret intelligence, change of name, his being in safety, but still requiring concealment; things in themselves not very familiar to their understandings, and related in the letter rather enigmatically.

Some time passed, and Agnese found a trusty messenger to convey an answer to Renzo, with the fifty scudi assigned to him by Lucia. At the sight of so much gold, he knew not what to think; and, with a mind agitated by wonder and suspense, which left no room for gratification, he set off in search of his amanuensis, to make him interpret the letter, and find the key to so strange a mystery.

Agnese's scribe, after lamenting, in the letter, the want of perspicuity in Renzo's epistle, went on to describe, in a way at least quite as much to be lamented, the tremendous history of "that person" (so he expressed himself); and here he accounted for the fifty scudi; then he went on to speak of the vow, employing much circumlocution in the expression of it, but adding, in more direct and explicit terms, the advice to set his heart at rest, and think no more about it.

Renzo very nearly quarreled with the reader; he trembled, shuddered, became enraged with what he had understood, and with what he could not understand. Three or four times did he make him read over the melan-

cholý writing, now comprehending better, now finding what had at first appeared clear, more and more incomprehensible. And, in this fervor of passion, he insisted upon his amanuensis immediately taking pen in hand, and writing a reply. After the strongest expressions imaginable of pity and horror at Lucia's circumstances—"Write," pursued he, as he dictated to his secretary, "that I won't set my heart at rest, and that I never will; and that this is not advice to be giving to a lad like me; and that I won't touch the money; that I'll put it by, and keep it for the young girl's dowry; that she already belongs to me; and that I know nothing about a vow; and that I have often heard say that the Madonna interests herself to help the afflicted, and obtain favors for them; but that she encourages them to despise and break their word, I never heard; and that this vow can't hold good; and that with this money we have enough to keep house here; and that if I am somewhat in difficulties now, it's only a storm which will quickly pass over;" and other similar things. Agnese received this letter also, and replied to it; and the correspondence continued in the manner we have described.

Until the autumn of the following year, 1629, our friends remained, some willingly, some by force, almost in the state in which we left them, nothing happening to any one, and no one doing anything worthy of being recorded. The autumn at length approached, in which Agnese and Lucia had counted upon meeting again; but a great public event frustrated that expectation: and this certainly was one of its most trifling effects. New circumstances, more general, more influential, and more extensive, reached even to them—even to the lowest of them, according to the world's scale. It was like a vast, sweeping, and irresistible hurricane, which, uprooting trees, tearing off roofs, leveling battlements, and scattering their fragments in every direction, stirs up the straws

hidden in the grass, pries into every corner for the light and withered leaves, which a gentler breeze would only have lodged there more securely, and bears them off in its headlong course of fury.

That the private events which yet remain for us to relate may be rendered intelligible, it is necessary to premise some kind of account of these public happenings.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE FAMINE

AFTER the sedition of St. Martin's it seemed that abundance had returned to Milan, as by enchantment. The bread shops were plentifully supplied, the price was as low as in the most prolific years, and flour in proportion. They who during those two days had employed themselves in shouting, or doing something worse, had now (excepting a few who had been seized) reason to congratulate themselves; and let it not be imagined that they spared these congratulations, after the first fear of being captured had subsided. In the squares, at the corners of the streets, and in the taverns, there was undiguised rejoicing, a general murmur of applauses, and half-uttered boasts of having found a way to reduce bread to a moderate price. But in the midst, however, of this vaunting and festivity, there was a secret feeling of disquietude, and presentiment that the thing could not last long. They besieged the bakers and meal-sellers, as they had done in the former artificial and transient abundance procured by the first tariff of Antonio Ferrer; he who had a little money in advance, invested it in bread and flour, which were stored up in chests, small barrels, and iron vessels. On November 15th, Antonio Ferrer issued a proclamation, in which all who had

any grain or flour in their houses were forbidden to buy either one or the other, and every one else to purchase more than would be required for two days, *under pain of pecuniary and corporal punishments, at the will of his Excellency.* It contained, also, intimations to the elders (a kind of public officer), and insinuations to all other persons, to inform against offenders; orders to magistrates to make strict search in any houses which might be reported to them; together with fresh commands to the bakers to keep their shops well furnished with bread, *under pain in case of failure, of five years in the galleys, or even greater penalties, at the will of his Excellency.*

At any rate, as they ordered the bakers to make so much bread, it was also necessary to give some orders that the materials for making it should not fail. They had contrived to introduce rice into a composition called mixed bread. On November 23d, an edict was published, to limit to the disposal of the superintendent, and the twelve members who constituted the board of provision, one half of the dressed rice which every one possessed; with the threat, to any one who should dispose of it without the permission of these noblemen, of the loss of the article, and a fine of three crowns a bushel.

But it was necessary to pay for this rice, and at a price very disproportioned to that of bread. The governor, in a decree of December 7th, fixed the price of rice at twelve livres per bushel. To those who should demand a higher price, as well as those who should refuse to sell, he threatened the loss of the article, and a fine of equal value, *and greater pecuniary, and even corporal punishment, including the galleys, at the will of his Excellency, according to the nature of the case, and the rank of the offender.*

Bread and flour being thus reduced to a moderate price at Milan, it followed of consequence that people flocked thither in crowds to obtain a supply. To obviate this inconvenience, as he said, Don Gonzalo prohibited carry-

ing bread out of the city, beyond the value of twenty pence, under penalty of the loss of the bread itself, and twenty-five crowns; *or, in case of inability, of two stripes in public and greater punishment still* (as usual), *at the will of his Excellency.* On the 22d of the same month a similar order was issued with regard to flour and grain.

The multitude had tried to gain abundance by pillage and incendiarism; the legal arm would have maintained it with the galleys and the scourge. The means were convenient enough in themselves, but what they had to do with the end, the reader knows; how they actually answered their purpose, he will see directly.

On a review of the circumstances, there were two principal fruits of the insurrection: destruction and actual loss of provision, in the insurrection itself, and a consumption, while the tariff lasted, immense, immeasurable, and, so to say, jovial, which rapidly diminished the small quantity of grain that was to have sufficed till the next harvest. To these general effects may be added, the punishment of four of the populace, who were hanged as leaders of the tumult, two before the bakehouse of the Crutches, and two at the end of the street where the house of the superintendent of provisions was situated.

We find, in the records of more than one historian, a picture of the country, and chiefly of the city, in the already advanced winter, and following spring, when the cause of the evil, the disproportion, i. e., between food and the demand for it, was operating without a check, and exerting its full force. It was not even checked by the introduction of a sufficient supply of corn from without, to which remedy were opposed the insufficiency of public and private means, the poverty of the surrounding countries, the prevailing famine, the tediousness and restrictions of commerce, and the laws themselves, tending to the production and violent maintenance of moderate price. We will give a sketch of the mournful picture.

At every step, the shops were closed; manufactories for the most part were deserted; the streets presented an indescribable spectacle, an incessant train of miseries, a perpetual abode of sorrows. Professed beggars of long standing, now become the smallest number, were mingled and lost in a new swarm, and sometimes reduced to contend for alms with those from whom, in former days, they had been accustomed to receive them.

But the most frequent, squalid, and hideous spectacle, was that of the country people, alone, in couples, or even in entire families; husbands and wives, with infants in their arms, or tied up in a bundle upon their backs, with children dragged along by the hand, or with old people behind. Some there were who, having had their houses invaded and pillaged by the soldiery, had fled thither, either as residents or passengers, in a kind of desperation; and among these there were some who displayed stronger incentives to compassion, and greater distinction in misery, in the scars and bruises from the wounds they had received in the defence of their few remaining provisions; while others gave way to a blind and brutal licentiousness.

Here and there, in the streets and cross-ways, along the walls, and under the eaves of the houses, were layers of trampled straw and stubble, mixed with dirty rags. Yet such revolting filth was the gift and provision of charity; they were places of repose prepared for some of those miserable wretches, where they might lay their heads at night. Occasionally, even during the day, some one might be seen lying there, whom faintness and abstinence had robbed of breath and the power of supporting the weight of his body.

Bending over some of these prostrated sufferers, a neighbor or passer-by might frequently be seen, attracted by a sudden impulse of compassion. In some places assistance was tendered, organized with more distant

foresight, and proceeding from a hand rich in the means, and experienced in the exercise, of doing good on a large scale—the hand of the good Federigo. He had made choice of six priests, whose ready and persevering charity was united with, and ministered to by, a robust constitution; these he divided into pairs, and assigned to each a third part of the city to perambulate, followed by porters laden with various kinds of food, together with other more effective and speedy restoratives, and clothing.

But these fruits of charity, together with the bounty of other private persons, if not so copious, at least more numerous, and the subsidies granted by the Council of the Decurioni to meet this emergency, were, after all, in comparison of the demand, scarce and inadequate. While some few mountaineers and inhabitants of the valleys, who were ready to die of hunger, had their lives prolonged by the Cardinal's assistance, others arrived at the extremest verge of starvation; the former, having consumed their measured supplies, returned to the same state; in other parts, not forgotten, but considered as less straitened by a charity which was compelled to make distinctions, the sufferings became fatal; in every direction they perished, from every direction they flocked to the city. And while, in two or three parts of the city, some of the most destitute and reduced were raised from the ground, revived, recovered, and provided for, for some time, in a hundred other quarters many more sank, languished, or even expired, without assistance, without alleviation.

Thus passed the winter and the spring: for some time the Board of Health had been remonstrating with the Board of Provision on the danger of contagion which threatened the city from so much suffering accumulated and spread throughout it; and had proposed, that all the vagabond mendicants should be collected together into the different hospitals. While this plan was being

debated upon and approved; while the means, methods, and places or were being devised to put it into effect, corpses multiplied in the streets, every day bringing additional numbers; and in proportion to this, followed all the other concomitants of loathesomeness, misery, and danger. It was proposed by the Board of Provisions, as more practicable and expeditious, to assemble all the mendicants, healthy or diseased, in one place, the Lazzeretto, and there to feed and maintain them at the public expense; and this expedient was resolved upon, in spite of the Board of Health, which objected that, in such an assemblage, the evil would only be increased which they wished to obviate.

The Lazzeretto at Milan is a quadrilateral and almost equilateral enclosure, outside the city, to the left of the gate called the Porta Orientale, and separated from the bastions by the width of the fosse, a road of circumvallation, and a smaller moat running round the building itself. The number of the rooms was once two hundred and eighty-eight, some larger than others; but in our days, a large aperture made in the middle, and a smaller one in one corner of the side that flanks the highway, have destroyed I know not how many. The primary object of the whole edifice, begun in the year 1489, was as the name itself denotes, to afford a place of refuge, in cases of necessity, to such as were ill of the plague. At the time of which we are speaking, the Lazzeretto was merely used as a repository for goods suspected of conveying infection.

To prepare it on this occasion for its new use, the usual forms were rapidly gone through, and all the goods were immediately liberated. Straw was spread out in every room, purchases were made of provisions, of whatever kind and in whatever quantities they could be procured; and, by a public edict, all beggars were invited to take shelter there.

Many willingly accepted the offer; all those who were lying ill in the streets or squares were carried thither; and in a few days there were altogether more than three thousand who had taken refuge there. But far more were they who remained behind. Whether it were that each one expected to see others go, and hoped that there would thus be a smaller party left to share the relief which could be obtained in the city, or from a natural repugnance to confinement, or from the disgust felt by the poor of all that is proposed to them by those who possess wealth or power, or from the actual knowledge of what the offered benefit was in reality, certain it is that the greater number, paying no attention to the invitation, continued to wander about begging through the city. This being perceived, it was considered advisable to pass from invitation to force. Bailiffs were sent round, who drove all the mendicants to the Lazzeretto, and even brought those bound who made any resistance. And though, as it had been imagined, and even expressly intended by the provision, a certain number of beggars made their escape from the city to go and live or die elsewhere, if it were only in freedom, yet the compulsion was such, that in a short time the number of refugees, what with guests and prisoners, amounted to nearly ten thousand.

How they fared all together for lodging and food, might be sadly conjectured, had we no positive information on the subject; but we have it. They slept crammed and heaped together, by twenty and thirty in each little cell, or lying under the porticoes, on pallets of putrid and fetid straw, or even on the bare ground: it was ordered, indeed, that the straw should be fresh and abundant, and frequently changed; but, in fact, it was scarce, bad, and never renewed. There were orders, likewise, that the bread should be of good quality;

for what administration ever decreed that bad commodities should be manufactured and dispensed?

To all these causes of mortality, the more effective as they acted upon diseased or enfeebled bodies, was added the most unpropitious season; obstinate rains, followed by a drought still more obstinate, and with it, an anticipated and violent heat. Whether it were that the union and augmentation of all these causes only served to increase the activity of a merely epidemic influenza, or that a real contagion had gained ground there, which, in bodies disposed and prepared for it by the scarcity and bad quality of food, by unwholesome air, uncleanliness, exhaustion, and by consternation, found its own temperature, so to say, and its own season—the conditions, in short, necessary for its birth, preservation, and multiplication; or whether, again, the contagion first broke out in the Lazzeretto itself, as, according to an obscure and inexact account, it seems was thought by the physicians of the Board of Health; or whether it were actually in existence and hovering about before that time, and that, when once introduced there, it spread with fresh and terrible rapidity, owing to the accumulation of bodies that were rendered still more disposed to receive it, from the increasing efficacy of the other causes: whichever be the truth, the daily number of deaths in the Lazzeretto shortly exceeded a hundred.

In the Board of Provision there were shame, stupefaction, and incertitude. They consulted and listened to the advice of the Board of Health, and could find no other course than to undo what had been done with so much preparation, so much expense, and so much unwillingness. They opened the Lazzeretto, and dismissed all who had any strength remaining, who made their escape with a kind of furious joy. The sick were transported to Santa Maria della Stella, at that time a hospital for beggars; and here the greater part perished.

With the harvest, the scarcity at length ceased; the mortality, however, whether epidemic or contagious, though decreasing from day to day, was protracted even into the season of autumn. It was on the point of vanishing, when a new scourge made its appearance.

Many important events had taken place during this interval. The Cardinal de Richelieu had proposed and carried by his potential voice in the French Council that some effectual succor should be rendered to the Duke of Nevers, and had, at the same time, persuaded the King himself to conduct the expedition in person. While making the necessary preparations, the Count de Nassau, imperial commissary, suggested at Mantua to the new Duke that he should give up the states into Ferdinand's hands, or that the latter would send an army to occupy them. The Duke, who, in more desperate circumstances, had scorned to accept so hard and little-to-be-trusted a condition, and encouraged now by the approaching aid from France, scorned it so much the more; but in terms in which the *no* was wrapped up and kept at a distance, as much as might be, and with even more apparent, but less costly, proposals of submission. The commissary took his departure, threatening that they would come to decide it by force. In the month of March the Cardinal Richelieu made a descent, with the King, at the head of an army; he demanded a passage from the Duke of Savoy, entered upon a treaty, which, however, was not concluded; and after an encounter, in which the French had the advantage, again negotiated and concluded an agreement, in which the Duke stipulated, among other things, that Cordova should raise the siege of Casale; pledging himself, in case of his refusal, to join with the French, for the invasion of the Duchy of Milan. Don Gonzalo, reckoning it, too, a very cheap bargain, withdrew his army from Casale, which was immediately entered by a body of French to reënforce the garrison.

The Cardinal de Richelieu determined to return to France on affairs which he considered more urgent. The King and the Cardinal returned with the greater part of the army, leaving only six thousand men in Susa, to occupy the pass, and maintain the treaty.

While this army was retiring on one hand, that of Ferdinand, headed by the Count di Collato, approached on the other; and prepared to descend upon the Milanese. Besides all the terrors to which the announcement of such a migration gave rise, the alarming rumor got abroad, and was confirmed by express tidings, that the plague was lurking in the army, of which there were always some symptoms at that time in the German troops, according to Varchi, in speaking of that which, a century before, had been introduced into Florence by their means. Alessandro Tadino, one of the Conservators of the public health, was commissioned by the Board to remonstrate with the governor on the fearful danger which threatened the country, if that vast multitude obtained a passage through it to Mantua.

To ward off the danger, therefore, the two physicians of the Board of Health proposed in this committee to prohibit, under severe penalties, the purchase of any kind of commodities whatsoever from the soldiers who were about to pass; but it was impossible to make the president understand the advantage of such a regulation.

As to Don Gonzalo, this reply was one of his last performances here; for the ill success of the war, promoted and conducted chiefly by himself, was the cause of his being removed from his post, in the course of the summer. The Marquis Ambrogio Spinola was despatched to supply his place, whose name had already acquired, in the wars of Flanders, the military renown it still retains.

In the mean while, the German army had received definite orders to march forward to Mantua, and, in the month of September, they entered the Duchy of Milan.

A great part of the inhabitants retired to the mountains, taking with them their most valuable effects, and driving their cattle before them; others stayed behind, either to tend upon some sick person, or to defend their houses from the flames, or to keep an eye upon precious things which they had concealed underground; some because they had nothing to lose; and a few villains, also, to make acquisitions. When the first detachment arrived at the village where they were to halt, they quickly spread themselves through this and the neighboring ones, and plundered them directly.

At length, however, they took their departure, and the distant sound of drums or trumpets gradually died away on the ear: this was followed by a few hours of death-like calm: and then a new hateful clashing of arms announced another squadron. These, no longer finding anything to plunder, applied themselves with the more fury to make destruction and havoc of the rest.

Colico was the first town of the Duchy invaded by these fiends; afterward, they threw themselves into Bellano; thence they entered and spread themselves through Valsassina, and then poured down into Lecco.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE FLIGHT TO THE MOUNTAINS

AND here we find that persons of our acquaintance were sharers in the wide-spread alarm.

One who saw not Don Abbondio, the day after the news was suddenly spread of the descent of the army, of its near approach, and destructive proceedings, knows very little of what embarrassment and consternation really are. Our Don Abbondio, who had resolved before anyone else, and more than

anyone else, to fly, by any possible mode of flight, and to any conceivable place of retreat, discovered insuperable obstacles and fearful dangers. "What shall I do?" exclaimed he. "Where shall I go?" The mountains, letting alone the difficulty of getting there, were not secure: it was well known that the German foot soldiers climbed them like cats, where they had the least indication or hope of finding booty. The lake was wide; there was a very high wind. It was impossible to find a vehicle, horse, or conveyance of any kind, to carry him away from the road the army had to traverse; and on foot Don Abbondio could not manage any great distance, and feared being overtaken by the way.

The poor old priest rushed through the house with eyes starting from his head, and half out of his senses; he kept following Perpetua to concert some plan with her; but Perpetua, busied in collecting the most valuable household goods, and hiding them, pushed by hurriedly, with her hands or arms full, and replied: "I shall have done directly putting these things away safely, and then we'll do what others do." Don Abbondio would have detained her, and discussed with her the different courses to be adopted; but she was less tractable than she had ever been before. "Others do the best they can; and so will we. I beg your pardon; but you are good for nothing but to hinder me. Do you think that others haven't skins to save, too? That the soldiers are only coming to fight with you? You might even lend a hand at such a time, instead of coming crying and bothering at one's feet." Left thus alone, he retreated to the window, looked, listened; or, seeing some one passing, cried out in a half-crying and half-reproachful tone: "Do your poor curate this kindness, to seek some horse, some mule, some ass, for him! Is it possible that nobody will help me! Oh, what people! Wait for me, at least, that I may go with you! wait till you are fifteen or twenty, to

take me with you, that I may not be quite forsaken! Will you leave me here to be martyred? Oh, what a set!" And he ran in search of Perpetua.

"Oh, I just wanted you!" said she. "Your money?"

"What shall we do?"

"Give it to me, and I'll go and bury it in the garden here by the house, together with the silver, and knives and forks."

"But"—

"Give it here; keep a few pence for whatever may happen, and then leave it to me."

Don Abbondio obeyed, went to his trunk, took out his little treasure, and handed it to Perpetua, who said, "I'm going to bury it in the garden, at the foot of the fig-tree;" and went out. Soon afterward she reappeared with a packet in her hand, containing some provision for the appetite, and a small empty basket, in the bottom of which she hastily placed a little linen for herself and her master, saying, at the same time, "You'll carry the breviary, at least!"

At this moment Agnese entered, also carrying a basket slung over her shoulder, and with the air of one who comes to make an important proposal.

Agnese herself, equally resolved not to await guests of this sort, alone as she was in the house, and with a little of the money of the Unnamed still left, had been hesitating for some time about a place of retreat. The remainder of those scudi, which in the months of famine had been of such use to her, was now the principal cause of her anxiety and irresolution, from having heard how, in the already invaded countries, those who had any money had found themselves in a worse condition than anybody else, exposed alike to the violence of the strangers and the treachery of their fellow-countrymen. While she was going about hiding here and there as best she could, what she could not manage to take with

her, and thinking about the scudi, which she kept sewn up in her stays, she remembered that, together with them, the Unnamed had sent her the most ample proffers of service; she remembered what she had heard related about his castle's being in so secure a situation, where nothing could reach it but birds; and she resolved to go and seek an asylum there. Wondering how she was to make herself known to the Signor, Don Abbondio quickly occurred to her mind; who, after the conversation we have related with the Archbishop, had always shown her particular marks of kindness. Thinking that in such a confusion the poor man would be still more perplexed and dismayed than herself, and that this course might appear desirable also to him, she came to make the proposal. Finding him with Perpetua, she suggested it to them both together.

"What say you to it, Perpetua?" asked Don Abbondio.

"I say that it is an inspiration from Heaven, and that we mustn't lose time, but set off at once on our journey."

"And then"—

"And then, when we get there, we shall find ourselves very well satisfied. It is well known now that the Signor desires nothing more than to benefit his fellow-creatures; and I've no doubt he'll be glad to receive us."

They took the road through the fields, each silently pursuing his way, absorbed in thought on his own particular circumstances, and looking rather narrowly around; more particularly Don Abbondio, who was in continual apprehension of the apparition of some suspicious figure, or something not to be trusted.

The sight of the different places they passed brought these thoughts to Agnese's mind more vividly, and increased the ardor of her desires. Leaving the footpath through the fields, they had taken the public road, the very same along which Agnese had come when bringing home her daughter for so short a time, after stay-

ing with her at the tailor's. The village was already in sight.

"We will just say 'How d'ye do?' to these good people," said Agnese.

"Yes, and rest there a little; for I begin to have had enough of this basket; and to get a mouthful to eat, too," said Perpetua.

"On condition we don't lose time; for we are not journeying for our amusement," concluded Don Abbondio.

They were received with open arms, and welcomed with much pleasure; it reminded them of a former deed of benevolence.

Agnese burst into a flood of tears on embracing the good woman, which was a great relief to her; and could only reply with sobs to the questions which she and her husband put about Lucia.

"She is better off than we are," said Don Abbondio; "she's at Milan, out of all danger, and far away from these diabolical dangers."

"Are the Signor Curato, and his companion, making their escape, then?" asked the tailor.

"Certainly," replied both master and servant, in one breath.

"Oh, how I pity you both!"

"We are on our way," said Don Abbondio, "to the castle of ——."

"Well, you've chosen a good asylum," resumed his host; "people would be puzzled to get up there by force. And you'll find company there; it's already reported that many have retreated thither, and many more are daily arriving."

"I would fain hope," said Don Abbondio, "that we shall be well received. I know this brave Signor; and when I once had the pleasure of being in his company, he was so exceedingly polite."

"A great and wonderful conversion!" resumed Don Abbondio; "and does he really continue to persevere?"

"Oh, yes," said the tailor; and he began to speak at some length upon the holy life of the Unnamed, and how, from being a scourge to the country, he had become its example and benefactor.

Don Abbondio was in a great hurry to be going; the tailor undertook to find a conveyance to carry them to the foot of the ascent, and having gone in search of one, shortly returned to say that it was coming.

While they were offering and refusing thanks, and exchanging condolence, good wishes, invitations, and promises to make another stay there on their return, the cart arrived at the front door. Putting in their baskets, the traveling party mounted after them, and undertook, with rather more ease and tranquillity of mind, the second half of their journey.

The tailor had related the truth to Don Abbondio about the Unnamed. From the day on which we left him, he had steadily persevered in the course he had proposed to himself, atoning for wrongs, seeking peace, relieving the poor, and performing every good work for which an opportunity presented itself. The courage he had formerly manifested in offence and defence now showed itself in abstaining from both one and the other.

True it is, that there were, indeed, many to whom this much-talked-of change brought anything but satisfaction: many hired perpetrators of crime, many other associates in guilt, who thereby lost a great support on which they had been accustomed to depend, and who beheld the threads of a deeply-woven plot suddenly snapped, at the moment, perhaps, when they were expecting the intelligence of its completion, fell to the share of the Cardinal Federigo. They regarded him as one who had intruded like an enemy into their affairs; the Un-

named would see to the salvation of his own soul; and nobody had any right to complain of what he did.

But when, on the descent of the German troops, several fugitives from the threatened or invaded dominions arrived at the castle of the Unnamed to request an asylum, he rejoiced that the weak and oppressed sought refuge within his walls, which had so long been regarded by them at a distance as a great scarecrow, and received these exiles with expressions of gratitude rather than courtesy; he caused it to be proclaimed that his house would be open to any one who should choose to take refuge there; and soon proposed to put, not only his castle, but the valley itself, into a state of defence, if any of the German or Bergamascan troops should attempt to come thither for plunder. He then had brought down from one of the garrets all the fire-arms, and other warlike weapons, which had been for some time deposited there, and distributed them among his household; ordered that all the peasants and tenants of the valley, who were willing to do so, should come with arms to the castle; provided those who had none with a sufficient supply; selected some to act as officers, and placed others under their command; assigned to each his post at the entrance, and in various parts of the valley, on the ascent, and at the gates of the castle; and established the hours and methods of relieving the guards.

CHAPTER XXX

THE CASTLE OF REFUGE

THOUGH the greatest concourse was not from the quarter by which our three fugitives approached the valley, but rather at the opposite entrance, yet, in this second half of their journey, they began to meet with fellow-travelers who were issuing

into the main road. Every time the cart overtook a pedestrian, there was an exchange of questions and replies. Some had made their escape, like our friends, without awaiting the arrival of the soldiers; some had heard the clanging of arms and kettle-drums; while others had actually beheld the soldiers.

"We are fortunate," said the two women; "let us thank Heaven for it. Our goods must go, but, at least, we are out of the way."

But Don Abbondio could not find so much to rejoice at; this concourse, and still more the far greater one which he heard was pouring in from the opposite direction, began to throw a gloom over his mind. "Oh, what a state of things!" muttered he to the women, at a moment when there was nobody at hand. "Don't you see, that to collect so many people into one place is just the same thing to draw all the soldiers here by force? Everybody is hiding, everybody carries off his things! nothing's left in the houses: so they'll think there must be some treasures up here. They'll surely come!"

His horror was greatly increased when, at the entrance of the valley, he saw a large body of armed men, some at the door of a house, and others quartered in the lower rooms.

"You see now, Signor master," said Perpetua, addressing him, "there are brave people here who will know how to defend us. Let the soldiers come now: these people are not like our clowns, who are good for nothing but to drag their legs after them."

"Hold your tongue," said Don Abbondio, in a low and angry tone, "hold your tongue; you don't know what you are talking about. Pray Heaven that the soldiers may make haste, or that they may never come to know what is doing here, and that the place is being fortified like a fortress. Don't you know it's the soldiers' business to take fortresses? Well, I'll see if there's no way

of putting oneself in safety on some of these peaks. They won't reach me there in a battle! oh, they won't reach me there!"

"If you're afraid, too, of being defended and helped," Perpetua was again beginning; but Don Abbondio sharply interrupted her, though still in a suppressed tone: "Hold your tongue; and take good care you don't report what we've said: woe unto us if you do! Remember that we must always put on a pleasant countenance here, and approve all we see."

At Malanotte they found another watch of armed men, to whom Don Abbondio submissively took off his hat, saying, in the mean while, in his heart—Alas! alas! I've certainly come to an encampment!—Here the cart stopped; they dismounted; Don Abbondio hastily paid and dismissed the driver; and with his two companions silently mounted the steep. "Oh, Signor Curato!" said Agnese, "to think that my poor Lucia passed along this road!"

"Will you hold your tongue, you absurd woman?" cried Don Abbondio in her ear. "Are those things to be bringing up here? Don't you know we are in his place? It was well for us nobody heard you then; but if you talk in this way"—

"Oh!" said Agnese; "now that he's a saint"—

"Well, be quiet!" replied Don Abbondio again in her ear. "Do you think one may say without caution, even to saints, all that passes through one's mind? Think rather of thanking him for his goodness to you."

"Oh, I've already thought of that: do you think I don't know even a little civility?"

"Civility is, not to say things that may be disagreeable to a person. And understand well, both of you, that it is not a place to go chatting about, and saying whatever may happen to come into your heads. It is a great Signor's house, you know that already: see what a house-

hold there is all around: people of all sorts come here: so be prudent, if you can; weigh your words; and, above all, let there be few of them, and only when there is a necessity: one can't go wrong when one is silent."

"You do far worse, with all your" — Perpetua begans but, "Hush!" cried Don Abbondio, in a suppressed voice, at the same time hastily taking off his hat, and making a profound bow: for, on looking up, he had discovered the Unnamed coming down to meet them. He, on his part, had noticed and recognized Don Abbondio, and was now hastening to welcome him.

"Signor Curato," said he, when he had reached him, "I should have liked to offer you my house on a pleasanter occasion; but, in any circumstances, I am exceedingly glad to be able to be of some service to you."

"Trusting in your illustrious Lordship's kindness," replied Don Abbondio, "I have ventured to come, under these melancholy circumstances, to intrude upon you: and as your illustrious Lordship sees, I have also presumed to bring company with me. This is my housekeeper."

"She is welcome," said the Unnamed.

"And this," continued Don Abbondio, "is a woman to whom your Lordship has already been very good: the mother of that"—

"Of Lucia," said Agnese.

"Of Lucia!" exclaimed the Unnamed, turning with a look of shame toward Agnese. "Been very good, I! You are very good to me, to come here—to me—to this house. You are most heartily welcome. You bring a blessing with you."

"Oh, sir," said Agnese, "I come to give you trouble. I have, too," continued she, going very close to his ear, "to thank you"—

The Unnamed interrupted these words, by making inquiries about Lucia; and having heard the intelligence they had to give, he turned to accompany his new guests

to the castle, and persisted in doing so, in spite of their ceremonious opposition. Agnese cast a glance at the curate, which meant to say—You see, now, whether there's any need for you to interpose with your advice!

On entering the castle, the Signor had Agnese and Perpetua conducted to an apartment in the quarter assigned to the women, which occupied three of the four sides of the inner court, in the back part of the building, and was situated on a jutting and isolated rock, overhanging a precipice. The men were lodged in the sides of the other court to the right and left, and in that which looked on the esplanade. In these quarters was a small apartment destined for the use of any clergy who might happen to take refuge there. Hither the Unnamed himself conducted Don Abbondio, who was the first to take possession of it.

Three or four and twenty days our fugitives remained at the castle, in a state of continual bustle, but without any incidents of importance. Perhaps, however, not a single day passed without their resorting to arms. Lansquenets were coming in this direction; cappelleti had been seen in that. Every time this intelligence was brought, the Unnamed sent men to reconnoiter; and, if there were any necessity, took with him some whom he kept in readiness for the purpose, and accompanied them beyond the valley, in the direction of the indicated danger. Usually it proved to be only foragers and disbanded pillagers, who contrived to make off before they were taken by surprise. But once, when driving away some of these, to teach them not to come again into that neighborhood, the Unnamed received intelligence that an adjoining village was invaded and given up to plunder. They were soldiers of various corps, who, having loitered behind to hunt for booty, had formed themselves into a band, and made a sudden irruption into the lands surrounding that where the army had taken up its quarters;

despoiling the inhabitants, and even levying contributions from them. The Unnamed made a brief harangue to his followers, and bade them march forward to the invaded village.

They arrived unexpectedly: the plunderers, who had thought of nothing but taking the spoil, abandoned their prey in the midst, on seeing men in arms and ready for battle coming down upon them, and hastily took to flight, without waiting for one another, in the direction whence they had come. He pursued them for a little distance; then, making a halt, waited awhile to see if any fresh object presented itself, and at length returned homeward. It is impossible to describe the shouts of applause and benediction which accompanied the troop of deliverers and its leader, on passing through the rescued village.

Agnese and Perpetua, not to eat the bread of idleness, had begged to be employed in the services which, in so large an establishment, must have been required; and in these occupations they spent a great part of the day, while the rest was passed in chatting with some friends, whose acquaintance they had made, or with the unfortunate Don Abbondio.

They chiefly, with great eagerness, sought information and kept count of the regiments which from time to time crossed the bridge of Lecco, because these might be considered as fairly gone, and really out of the territory. The cavalry of Wallenstein passed it, and the infantry of Marradas; the cavalry of Anlzalt, and the infantry under Brandeburgo; the troops of Montecuccoli, then those of Ferrari; then followed Altringer, then Furstenburg, then Colloredo; after them came the Croatians, Torquato Conti, and this, that, and the other leader; and last of all, in Heaven's good time, came at length Galasso. The flying squadron of Venetians made their final exit; and the whole country, on the other

hand, was once more set at liberty. Those belonging to the invaded villages which were first cleared of their ravages, had already begun to evacuate the castle, and every day people continued to leave the place. Our three refugees were, perhaps, the last to make their departure, owing to Don Abbondio's extreme reluctance to run the risk, if they returned home immediately, of meeting some straggling soldiers who might still be loitering in the rear of the army. It was in vain Perpetua repeated and insisted that the longer they delayed, the greater opportunities they afforded to the thieves of the neighborhood to enter the house and finish the business: whenever the safety of life was at stake, Don Abbondio invariably gained the day; unless, indeed, the imminence of the danger were such as to deprive him of the power of self-defence.

On the day fixed for their departure, the Unnamed had a carriage in readiness at Malanotte, in which he had already placed a full supply of clothes for Agnese. Drawing her a little aside, he forced her to accept a small store of scudi also, to compensate for the damages she would find at home; although she kept repeating that she had still some of the first supply left.

"When you see your poor, good Lucia," said he, the last thing, "I am already convinced she prays for me, because I have done her so much wrong. Tell her that I thank her, and trust in God her prayers will return in equal blessings upon her own head."

As they advanced a little on their journey, our travelers began to witness, with their own eyes, something of what they had heard described: vineyards despoiled, not as by the vintager, but as if a storm of wind and hail combined had exerted their utmost energies. In the villages, too, doors shivered to pieces, windows destroyed, straw, rags, rubbish of all kinds, lying in heaps, or scattered all over the pavement; a close atmosphere,

and horrid odors of a more revolting nature proceeding from the houses.

With these scenes before their eyes, and with the expectation of finding their own houses in the same state, they at length arrived there, and found that their expectations were indeed realized.

Agnese deposited her bundles in one corner of her little yard, the cleanest spot that remained about the house; she then set herself to sweep it thoroughly, and collect and rearrange the little furniture left her; she got a carpenter and blacksmith to come and mend the doors and window-frames; and then, unpacking the linen which had been given her, and secretly counting over her fresh store of coins, she exclaimed—"I've fallen upon my feet! God, and the Madonna, and that good Signor, be thanked!"

Don Abbondio and Perpetua entered the house without the aid of keys, and at every step they took in the passage encountered a fetid odor, which almost drove them back. Holding their noses, they advanced to the kitchen-door, carefully picking their way to avoid the most disgusting parts of the filthy straw which covered the ground, and cast a glance around.

"Ah, the dirty pigs!" exclaimed Perpetua. "Ah, the thieves!" cried Don Abbondio; and, as if making their escape, they went out by another door, that led into the garden. Once more drawing their breath, they went straight up to the fig-tree; but, even before reaching it, they discovered that the ground had been disturbed, and both uttered an exclamation of dismay, and, on coming up, they found in truth, instead of the dead, only the empty tomb. This gave rise to some disputes. Don Abbondio began to scold Perpetua for having hidden it so badly: it may be imagined whether she would fail to retort: and after indulging in mutual recrimination till they were tired, they returned, with many a lingering

look cast back at the empty hole, grumbling into the house. They found things nearly in the same state everywhere. Long and diligently they worked to cleanse and purify the house, and gradually restoring doors, furniture, and utensils, with money lent to them by Agnese.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE PLAGUE

THE plague, which the Board of Health had feared might enter with the German troops into the Milanese country, had entered it indeed, as is well known; and it is likewise well known, that it paused not here, but invaded and ravaged a great part of Italy. Following the thread of our story, we now come to relate the principal incidents of this calamity in Milan, for almost exclusively of the city do the records of the times treat.

Of the many contemporary accounts, there is not one which is sufficient by itself to convey a distinct and connected idea of it; as there is not, perhaps, one which may not give us some assistance in forming that idea. In every one, essential facts are omitted which are recorded in others; in every one are errors of material importance. In all, too, a strange confusion of times and things prevailed, and a perpetual wandering backward and forward, as it were at random, without design, special or general.

Throughout the whole track of the territory traversed by the army, corpses might be found either in the houses, or lying upon the highway. Very shortly, single individuals, or whole families, began to sicken and die of violent and strange complaints, with symptoms unknown to the greater part of those who were then alive. Only a few had ever seen them before: the few who could remember the plague which, fifty-three years previously, had

desolated a great part of Italy indeed, but especially the Milanese, where it was then, and is still, called the plague of San Carlo.

The oldest physician of his time, Lodovico Settala, who had not only seen that plague, but had been one of its most active and interpid and celebrated successful opponents and who now, in strong suspicion of this, was on the alert, and busily collecting information, reported, October 20th, in the Council of the Board of Health, that the contagion had undoubtedly broken out in the village of Chiuso, the last in the territory of Lecco, and on the confines of the Bergamascan district.

Similar tidings arrived from Lecco and Bellano. The Board then contented themselves with despatching a commissioner, who should take a physician from Como by the way, and accompany him on a visit to the places signified. Both of them, either from ignorance or some other reason, suffered themselves to be persuaded by an ignorant barber of Bellano that this sort of disease was not the pestilence, but the ordinary effect of the autumnal exhalations from the marshes, and of the privations and sufferings undergone during the passage of the German troops. This affirmation was reported to the Board, who seem to have been perfectly satisfied with it.

But as additional reports of the mortality in every quarter poured in, two deputies were despatched to see and provide against it. When these men arrived, the evil had spread so widely, that proofs offered themselves to their view without being sought for. They found the towns barricaded, others almost deserted, and the inhabitants escaped and encamped in the fields, or scattered throughout the country. They made inquiries as to the number of deaths, which was really fearful; they visited the sick and dead, and everywhere recognized the dark and terrible marks of the pestilence. They then speedily conveyed the disastrous intelligence by letter to the

Board of Health, who, on receiving it, October 30th, prepared to issue warrants to shut out of the city any persons coming from the countries where the plague had shown itself; and while preparing the decree they gave some summary orders beforehand to the customhouse officers.

On November 14th, having made their report to the Board, the commissioners received from this committee a commission to present themselves to the Governor, and to lay before him the state of things. They went, accordingly, and brought back word that he was exceedingly sorry to hear such news, and had shown a great deal of feeling about it; but the thoughts of war were more pressing! And on November 18th, the Governor issued a proclamation, in which he prescribed public rejoicings for the birth of the Prince Charles, the first-born son of the king, Philip IV, without thinking of, or without caring for, the danger of suffering a large concourse of people under such circumstances. This person was, as we have elsewhere said, the celebrated Ambrogio Spinola, sent for the very purpose of adjusting this war, to repair the errors of Don Gonzalo, and, incidentally, to govern.

But that which even creates another and greater feeling of wonder, is the behavior of the people themselves; of those who, unreached as yet by the contagion, had so much reason to fear it. On the arrival of the intelligence from the territories which were so grievously infected with it, who would not have thought that a general stir among the people in the city would have been created, and that they would have been diligent in taking precautions? Nevertheless, if in anything the records of the times agree, it is in attesting that there was none of these. The scarcity of the preceding year, the violence of the soldiery, and their sufferings of mind, seemed to them more than enough to account for the mortality.

Cardinal Federigo, however, as soon as he heard of the

first cases of a contagious sickness, enjoined his priests to impress upon the people the importance and obligation of making known every similar case, and delivering up any infected or suspected goods.

The Board of Health solicited precaution and coöperation: it was all but in vain. And in the Board itself their solicitude was far from equalling the urgency of the case; it was the two physicians, as Tadino frequently affirms, who, persuaded and deeply sensible of the gravity and imminence of the danger, urged forward that body, which was then to urge forward others.

We have already seen how, on the first tidings of the plague, there had been indifference and remissness in acting, and even in obtaining information; we now give another instance of dilatoriness not less portentous, if indeed it were not compelled by obstacles interposed by the superior magistrates. That proclamation in the form of warrants, resolved upon on October 30th, was not completed till the 23d of the following month, nor published till the 29th. The plague had already entered Milan!

Tadino and Ripamonti would record the name of the individual who first brought it thither, together with other circumstances of the person and the fact. Both say that it was an Italian soldier in the Spanish service; but in nothing else do they agree, not even in the name.

However it may be, this soldier, unfortunate himself, and the bearer of misfortune to others, entered the city with a large bundle of clothes purchased or stolen from the German troops; he went to stay at the house of one of his relatives in the suburbs of the Porta Orientale, near to the Capuchin Convent. Hardly had he arrived there, when he was taken ill; he was conveyed to the hospital; here, a spot, discovered under one of the armpits, excited some suspicion in the mind of the person who tended him, of what was in truth the fact; and on the fourth day he died.

The Board of Health immediately ordered his family to be kept separate, and confined within their own house; and his clothes, and the bed on which he had lain at the hospital, were burned. Two attendants, who had there nursed him, and a good friar, who had rendered him his assistance, were all three, within a few days, seized with the plague. The suspicions which had here been felt, from the beginning, of the nature of the disease, and the precautions taken in consequence, prevented the further spread of the contagion from this source.

But the soldier had left seed outside, which delayed not to spring up and shoot forth. The first person in whom it broke out was the master of the house where he had lodged, one Carlo Colonna, a lute-player. All the inmates of the dwelling were then, by order of the Board, conveyed to the Lazzeretto; where the greater number took to their beds, and many died of infection.

The reports of these instances, when they reached the Board of Health at all, reached it, for the most part, tardily and uncertainly. Dread of sequestration and the Lazzeretto sharpened every one's wits; they concealed the sick, corrupted the grave-diggers, and obtained false certificates, by means of bribes, from subalterns of the Board itself, deputed by it to visit and inspect the dead.

As, however, on every discovery they succeeded in making, the Board ordered the wearing apparel to be committed to the flames, put the houses under sequestration, and sent the inmates to the Lazzeretto, it is easy to imagine what must have been the anger and dissatisfaction of the nobility, merchants, and lower orders, persuaded, as they all were, that they were mere causeless vexations without any advantage.

Toward the latter end of March, sickness and deaths began rapidly to multiply in all quarters of the city, with the unusual accompaniments of spasms, palpitation, lethargy, delirium, and those fatal symptoms, livid spots

and sores; and these deaths were, for the most part, rapid, violent, and not infrequently sudden, without any previous tokens of illness. Those physicians who were opposed to the belief of contagion, unwilling now to admit what they had hitherto derided, yet obliged to give a generic name to the new malady, which had become too common and too evident to go without one, adopted that of malignant or pestilential fevers—a miserable expedient; a mere play upon words, which was productive of much harm; because, while it appeared to acknowledge the truth, it only contributed to the disbelief of what it was most important to believe and discern, viz., that the infection was conveyed by means of the touch. The magistrates began to lend a little more ear to the appeals and proposals of the Board of Health, to support its proclamations, and second the sequestrations prescribed, and the quarantines enjoined by this tribunal. The Board was also constantly demanding money to provide for the daily expenses of the Lazzeretto, now augmented by so many additional services; and for this they applied to the Decurioni, while it was being decided whether such expenses should be charged to the city, or to the royal exchequer. The Decurioni endeavored to raise money by loans and taxes; and of what they thus accumulated they gave a little to the Board of Health, a little to the poor, purchased a little corn, and thus, in some degree, supplied the existing necessity. The severest sufferings had not yet arrived.

In the Lazzeretto there was another arduous undertaking: to insure attendance and subordination, to preserve the enjoined separations, to maintain, in short, the government prescribed by the Board of Health. The Board and the Decurioni, not knowing which way to turn, bethought themselves of applying to the Capuchins, and besought the Father Commissary to give them a competent person to govern this desolate kingdom. The

commissary proposed to them one Father Felice Casati, a man of advanced age, who enjoyed great reputation for charity, activity, and gentleness of disposition, combined with a strong mind—a character which, as the sequel will show, was well deserved; and as his coadjutor and assistant, one Father Michele Pozzobonelli, still a young man, but grave and stern in mind as in countenance. Gladly enough were they accepted; and on March 30th they entered the Lazzeretto. Father Felice, ever diligent, ever watchful, went about day and night, through the porticoes, chambers, and open spaces, sometimes carrying a spear, sometimes armed only with haircloth; he animated and regulated every duty, pacified tumults, settled disputes, threatened, punished, reproved, comforted, dried and shed tears. At the very outset he took the plague; recovered, and with fresh alacrity resumed his first duties.

Among the public, obstinacy in denying the existence of the pestilence gave way naturally, and gradually disappeared, in proportion as the contagion extended itself before their own eyes, by means of contact and intercourse; and still more when, after having been for some time confined to the lower orders, it began to take effect upon the higher.

But the vengeance of convinced obstinacy is sometimes such as to raise a wish that it had continued unshaken and unconquered, and this was truly one of these occasions. They who had so resolutely and perseveringly impugned the existence of a germ of evil among them, which might propagate itself by natural means and make much havoc, unable now to deny its propagation, and unwilling to attribute it to those means (for this would have been to confess at once a great delusion and a great error), were so much the more inclined to find some other cause for it, and make good any that might happen to present itself. Unhappily,

there was one in readiness in the ideas and traditions common at that time in every part of Europe, of magical arts, diabolical practices, people sworn to disseminate the plague by means of contagious poisons and witchcraft. These and similar things had already been supposed and believed during many other plagues; and at Milan, especially, in that of half a century before. It may be added that, even during the preceding year, a despatch, signed by King Philip IV, had been forwarded to the governor, in which he was informed that four Frenchmen had escaped from Madrid, who were sought upon suspicion of spreading poisonous and pestilential ointments; and requiring him to be on the watch, perchance they should arrive at Milan. The governor communicated the despatch to the senate and the Board of Health; and thenceforward, it seems, they thought no more about it. When, however, the plague broke forth, and was recognized by all, the return of this intelligence to memory, may have served to confirm and support the vague suspicion of an iniquitous fraud; it may even have been the first occasion of creating it.

But two actions, one of blind fear, the other of I know not what malicious mischief, were what converted this vague suspicion of a possible attempt into more than suspicion of a real plot. Some persons, who fancied they had seen people, on the evening of May 17th in the cathedral, anointing a partition which was used to separate the spaces assigned to the two sexes, had this partition, and a number of benches enclosed within it, brought out during the night; although the President of the Board of Health, having repaired thither with four members of the committee, and having inspected the screen, the benches, and the stoups of holy water, and found nothing that could confirm the ignorant suspicion of a poisonous attempt, had declared, to humor other people's fancies, and *rather to exceed in caution, than from any*

conviction of necessity, that it would be sufficient to have the partition washed. This mass of piled-up furniture produced a strong impression of consternation among the multitude, to whom any object so readily became an argument. It was said, and generally believed, that all the benches, walls, and even the bell-ropes in the cathedral, had been rubbed over with unctuous matter. Nor was this affirmed only at the time: all the records of contemporaries (some of them written after a lapse of many years) which allude to this incident, speak of it with equal certainty of asseveration: and we should be obliged to conjecture its true history, did we not find it in a letter from the Board of Health to the Governor, preserved in the archives of San Fedele, from which we have extracted it, and whence we have quoted the words we have written in italics.

Next morning a new, stranger, and more significant spectacle, struck the eyes and minds of the citizens. In every part of the city they saw the doors and walls of the houses stained and daubed with long streaks of I know not what filthiness, something yellowish and whitish, spread over them as if with a sponge, whether it were a base inclination to witness a more clamorous and more general consternation, or a still more wicked design to augment the public confusion, the fact is attested in such a manner, that it seems to us less rational to attribute it to a dream of the imagination, than to a wickedly malicious trick, not entirely new, indeed, to the wit of man.

The city, already tumultuously inclined, was now turned upside down; the owners of the houses, with lighted straw, burned the besmeared parts; and passers-by stopped, gazed, shuddered, murmured. The Board of Health issued a proclamation, in which they promised reward and impunity to any one who would bring to light the author or authors of the deed.

While the Board was thus making inquiries, many of the public, as is usually the case, had already found the answer. Among those who believed this to be a poisonous ointment, some were sure it was an act of revenge of Don Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova, for the insults received at his departure; some, that it was an idea of Cardinal Richelieu's to desolate Milan, and make himself master of it without trouble. It did not appear, however, as had been dreaded, that infection and universal slaughter immediately ensued: and this was probably the cause that this first fear began by degrees to subside, and the matter was, or seemed to be, forgotten.

There was, after all, a certain number of persons not yet convinced that it was indeed the plague; and because, both in the Lazzeretto and in the city, some were restored to health, it was affirmed by the common people, and even by the many partial physicians, that it was not really the plague, or all would have died. To remove every doubt, the Board of Health employed an expedient comformable to the necessity of the case. On one of the festal days of Whitsuntide, the citizens were in the habit of flocking to the cemetery of San Gregorio, outside the Porta Orientale, to pray for the souls of those who had died in the former contagion, and whose bodies were there interred; and borrowing from devotion an opportunity of amusement and sight-seeing, every one went thither in his best and gayest clothing. One whole family, among others, had this day died of the plague. At the hour of the thickest concourse, in the midst of carriages, riders on horseback, and foot-passengers, the corpses of this family were, by order of the Board, drawn naked on a car to the above-named burying-ground, in order that the crowd might behold in them the manifest token, the revolting seal and symptom, of the pestilence. A cry of horror and consternation arose wherever the car was passing; a prolonged murmur was predominant

where it had passed, another murmur preceded it. The real existence of the plague was more believed: besides, every day it continued to gain more belief by itself; and that very concourse would contribute not a little to propagate it.

First, then, it was not the plague, absolutely not—by no means: the very utterance of the term was prohibited. Then, it was pestilential fevers: the idea was indirectly admitted in an adjective. Then, it was not the true nor real plague; that is to say, it was the plague, but only in a certain sense; not positively and undoubtedly the plague, but something to which no other name could be affixed. Lastly, it was the plague, without doubt, without dispute: but even then another idea was appended to it, the idea of poison and witchcraft, which altered and confounded that conveyed in the word they could no longer repress.

CHAPTER XXXII

A REIGN OF HORROR

THE difficulty of providing for the mournful exigencies of the times becoming daily greater, it was resolved, on May 4th, in the Council of the Decurioni, to have recourse for aid to the governor; and accordingly, on the 22d, two members of that body were despatched to the camp, who represented to him the suffering and poverty of the city: the enormous expenditure, the treasury exhausted and involved in debt, its future revenue in pledge, and the current taxes unpaid, by reason of the general impoverishment, produced by so many causes, and especially by the havoc of the military; they submitted to his consideration that, according to laws and customs, which had never been repealed, and by a special decree of Charles V, the ex-

penses of the pestilence ought to be defrayed from the king's exchequer: that, in the plague of 1576, the Governor, the Marquis of Ayamonte, had not indeed remitted all the taxes of the Chamber, but had relieved the city with forty thousand scudi from that same Chamber; and, finally, they demanded four things: that, as once before already, the taxes should not be exacted; that the Chamber should grant some supplies of money; that the governor should acquaint the king with the misery of the city and the territory; and that the duchy should be exempted from again quartering the military, as it had been already wasted and destroyed by the former troops. Spinola gave in reply condolences and fresh exhortations: he said he was sorry he did not happen to be in the city, that he might use all his endeavors for its relief; but he hoped that all would be compensated for by the zeal of these gentlemen: that this was the time to expend without parsimony, and to do all they could by every means: and as to the express demands, he would provide for them in the best way the times and existing necessities would allow.

Together with this resolution, the Decurioni had also taken another, to request the Cardinal Archbishop to appoint a solemn procession, bearing through the city the body of San Carlo.

The good prelate refused, for many reasons. This confidence in an arbitrary measure displeased him; and he feared that if the effect should not correspond to it, which he had also reason to fear, confidence would be converted into offence. He feared further, that, *if indeed there were poisoners about*, the procession would afford too convenient opportunities for crime; *if there were not*, such a concourse of itself should not fail to disseminate the contagion more widely: *a danger far more real.* For the suppressed suspicions of poisonous ointments had, meanwhile, revived more violently than ever.

People had again seen, or this time they fancied they had seen anointed, walls, entrances to public buildings, doors of private houses, and knockers. The news of these discoveries flew from mouth to mouth; and, as it happens even more than usually in great prepossessions, the report produced the same effect that the sight of it would have done. A subtle, instantaneous, exceedingly penetrating poison, were words more than enough to explain the virulence, and all the other most mysterious and usual accompaniments of the contagion.

The frenzy now spread like the contagion. The traveler who was met by peasants out of the highway, or was seen loitering and amusing himself on the public road, or stretched upon the ground to rest; the stranger in whom they fancied they saw something singular and suspicious in countenance or dress—these were poisoners; the alarm was given, and the people flocked together; the unhappy victims were pelted with stones, or, if taken, were violently dragged to prison.

But the Decurioni, not discouraged by the refusal of the judicious prelate, continued to repeat their entreaties, which were noisily seconded by the popular vote. The Bishop persevered for some time, and endeavored to dissuade them: so much and no more could the discretion of one man do against the judgment of the times, and the pertinacity of the many. On the repetition of the entreaties, he yielded, gave his consent to the procession, and further, to the desire, that the urn which contained the relics of San Carlo should afterward remain exposed for eight days to the public concourse, on the high altar of the cathedral.

Three days were spent in preparations; and on June 11th the procession started by early dawn from the cathedral. A long file of people led the way, chiefly women, their faces covered with ample silken veils, and many of them barefoot, and clothed in sackcloth. Then

followed bands of artificers, preceded by their several banners, the different fraternities, in habits of various shades and colors; then came the brotherhood of monks, then the secular clergy, each with the insignia of his rank, and bearing a lighted wax taper. In the center, amid the brilliancy of still more numerous torches, and the louder tones of the chanting, came the coffin, under a rich canopy, supported alternately by four canons most pompously attired. Through the crystal sides appeared the venerated corpse, the limbs enveloped in splendid pontifical robes, and the skull covered with a mitre; and under the mutilated and decomposed features, some traces might still be distinguished of his former countenance, such as it was represented in pictures, and as some remembered seeing and honoring it during his life. Behind the mortal remains of the deceased pastor, and near him in person, as well as in merit, blood, and dignity, came the Archbishop Federigo.

The procession passed through all quarters of the city and returned not to the cathedral till considerably past midday.

But lo! the day following, just while the presumptuous confidence, nay, in many, the fanatical assurance prevailed, that the procession must have cut short the progress of the plague, the mortality increased in every class, in every part of the city, to such a degree, and with so sudden a leap, that there was hardly anyone who did not behold in the very procession itself, the cause and occasion of this fearful increase. But the greater number did not attribute this effect to so great and so prolonged a crowding together of persons, nor to the infinite multiplication of fortuitous contact, but rather to the facilities afforded to the poisoners of executing their iniquitous designs on a large scale. It was said that, mixing in the crowd, they had infected with their ointment everybody they had encountered. But as this appeared

neither a sufficient nor appropriate means for producing so vast a mortality, which extended itself to every rank; as, apparently, it had not been possible, even for an eye the most watchful, and the most quick-sighted from suspicion, to detect any unctuous matter, or spots of any kind, during the march, recourse was had for the explanation of the fact to that other fabrication, already ancient, and received at that time into the common scientific learning of Europe, of magical and venomous powders; it was said that these powders, scattered along the streets, and chiefly at the places of halting, had clung to the trains of the dresses, and still more to the feet of those who had that day, in great numbers, gone about barefoot.

From that day, the contagion continued to rage with increasing violence; in a little while hardly a house was left untouched; and the population of the Lazzeretto, according to Somaglia above quoted, amounted to from two to twelve thousand. In the course of time, according to almost all reports, it reached sixteen thousand. On the fourth of July the daily mortality exceeded five hundred. Still later, when the plague was at its height, it reached, and for some time remained at, twelve or fifteen hundred, according to the most common computation.

It may be imagined what must now have been the difficulties of the Decurioni, upon whom was laid the burden of providing for the public necessities, and repairing what was still reparable in such a calamity. They were obliged every day to replace, every day to augment, public officers of numerous kinds: Monatti, by which denomination (even then at Milan of ancient date, and uncertain origin) were designated those who were devoted to the most painful and dangerous services of a pestilence, viz., taking corpses from the houses, out of the streets, and from the Lazzeretto, transporting them on carts to the graves, and burying them; carrying or conducting the

sick to the Lazzeretto, overlooking them there, and burning and cleasing infected or suspected goods: Apparitori, whose special office it was to precede the carts, warning passengers, by the sound of a little bell, to retire and Commissarii, who superintended both the other classes, under the immediate orders of the Board of Health. The Council had also to keep the Lazzeretto furnished with physicians, surgeons, medicines, food, and all the other necessaries of an infirmary; and to provide and prepare new quarters for the newly arising needs. For this purpose, they had cabins of wood and straw hastily constructed, in the unoccupied space within the Lazzeretto; and another Lazzeretto was erected, also of thatched cabins, with an enclosure of boards, capable of containing four thousand persons. These not being sufficient, two others were decreed; they even began to build them, but, from the deficiency of means of every kind, they remained uncompleted. Means, men, and courage failed, in proportion as the necessity for them increased. And not only did the execution fall so far short of the projects and decrees—not only were many too clearly acknowledged necessities deficiently provided for, even in words, but they arrived at such a pitch of impotency and desperation, that many of the most deplorable and urgent cases were left without succor of any kind. A great number of infants, for example, died of absolute neglect, their mothers having been carried off by the pestilence. The Board of Health proposed that a place of refuge should be founded for these, and for destitute lying-in women, that something might be done for them, but they could obtain nothing.

So, also an ample but solitary grave which had been dug near the Lazzeretto being completely filled with corpses, and fresh bodies, which became day by day more numerous, remaining therefore in every direction unburied, the magistrates, after having in vain sought for

hands to execute the melancholy task, were compelled to acknowledge that they knew not what course to pursue. Nor was it easy to conjecture what would be the end, had not extraordinary relief been afforded. The President of the Board of Health solicited it almost in despair, and with tears in his eyes, from those two excellent friars who presided at the Lazzeretto; and Father Michele pledged himself to clear the city of dead bodies in the course of four days. At the expiration of eight days he had not only provided for the immediate necessity, but for that also which the most ominous foresight could have anticipated for the future. With a friar for his companion, and with officers granted him for this purpose by the President, he set off out of the city in search of peasants; and partly by the authority of the Board of Health, partly by the influence of his habit and his words, he succeeded in collecting two hundred, whom he distributed in three separate places, to dig the ample graves. He then despatched monatti from the Lazzeretto to collect the dead, and on the day appointed his promise was fulfilled.

Federigo, as was to be expected from him, gave to all encouragement and example. Having seen almost the whole of his archiepiscopal household perish around him, solicited by relatives, by the first magistrates, and by the neighboring princes to withdraw from danger to some solitary country-seat, he rejected this counsel and these entreaties in the spirit with which he wrote to his clergy: "Be ready to abandon this mortal life, rather than the family, the children, committed to us; go forward into the plague, as to life, as to a reward, when there is one soul to be won to Christ."

In public calamities and in long-continued disturbance of settled habits, of whatever kind, there may always be beheld an augmentation, a sublimation of virtue; but, alas! there is never wanting, at the same time, an aug-

mentation, far more general in most cases, of crime. This occasion was remarkable for it. The villains whom the pestilence spared and did not terrify, found in the common confusion, and in the relaxation of all public authority, a new opportunity of activity, together with new assurances of impunity; nay, the administration of public authority itself came, in a great measure, to be lodged in the hands of the worst among them. Generally speaking, none devoted themselves to the offices of monatti and apparitori but men over whom the attractions of rapine and license had more influence than the terror of contagion, or any natural object of horror.

The strictest orders were laid upon these people; the severest penalties threatened them; stations were assigned them; and commissaries, as we have said, placed over them: over both, again, magistrates and nobles were appointed in every district, with authority to enforce good government summarily on every opportunity. Such a state of things went on and took effect up to a certain period; but, with the increase of deaths and desolation, and the terror of the survivors, these officers came to be, as it were, exempted from all supervision; they constituted themselves, the monatti especially, arbiters of everything. They entered the houses like masters, like enemies; and, not to mention their plunder, and how they treated the unhappy creatures reduced by the plague to pass through such hands, they laid them—these infected and guilty hands—on the healthy—children, parents, husbands, wives, threatening to drag them to the Lazzeretto, unless they redeemed themselves, or were redeemed with money.

Together with the wickedness, the folly of the people increased: every prevailing error received more or less additional force from the stupefaction and agitation of their minds, and was more widely and more precipitately applied; while every one served to strengthen

and aggravate that special mania about poisonings, which, in its effects and ebullitions, was often, as we have seen, itself another crime. The image of this supposed danger beset and tortured the minds of the people far more than the real and existing danger.

Among the stories which this mania about poisoning gave rise to, one deserves to be mentioned for the credit it acquired, and the extended dissemination it met with. It was related that such a person, on such a day, had seen a carriage and six standing in the Square of the Cathedral, containing some great personage with a large suite, of lordly aspect, but dark and sunburnt, with fiery eyes, hair standing on end, and a threatening expression about the mouth. The spectator, invited to enter the equipage, complied; and after taking a turn or two, stopped and dismounted at the gate of a palace, where, entering with the rest, he beheld horrors and delights, deserts and gardens, and caverns and halls; and in these were phantoms seated in council. Lastly, huge chests of money were shown to him, and he was told that he might take as much as he liked, if, at the same time, he would accept a little vessel of unctuous matter, and go about anointing with it through the city. Having refused to agree to the terms, he instantly found himself in the place whence he had been taken.

This story, generally believed there by the people, and, according to Ripamonti, not sufficiently ridiculed by many learned men, travelled through the whole of Italy, and even further: an engraving of it was made in Germany; and the electoral Archbishop of Mayence wrote to Cardinal Federigo, to ask what he must believe of the wonderful prodigies related at Milan, and received for answer that they were mere dreams.

Two illustrious and highly-deserving writers have asserted that Cardinal Federigo entertained doubt about these poisonings. We would gladly give still more com-

plete commendation to the memory of this excellent and benevolent man, and represent the good prelate in this, as in many other things, distinguished from the multitude of his contemporaries; but we are constrained, instead, to remark in him another example of the powerful influence of public opinion, even on the most exalted minds. It is evident—from the way, at least, in which Ripamonti relates his thoughts on the subject—that from the beginning he had had some doubts about it; and throughout he always considered that credulity, ignorance, fear, and a wish to excuse their long negligence in guarding against the contagion, had a considerable share in this opinion: that there was a good deal of exaggeration in it; but at the same time something of truth. There is a small work on this pestilence, written by his own hand, preserved in the Ambrosian Library; and the following is one among many instances where such a sentiment is expressed:—"On the method of compounding and spreading such poisonous ointments many and various things are reported, some of which we consider as true, while others appear to us entirely imaginary."

Some there were who, to the very last, and even afterward, thought that it was all imagination.

CHAPTER XXXIII

RENZO MAKES A JOURNEY

ONE night, toward the end of August, during the height of the pestilence, Don Rodrigo returned to his residence at Milan, accompanied by the faithful Griso, one of the three or four who remained to him out of his whole household. He was returning from a company of friends, who were accustomed to assemble at a banquet to divert the melancholy of the times; and on each occasion some new

friends were there, some old ones missing. That day had been one of the merriest of the party; and, among other things, had excited a great deal of laughter among the company, by a kind of funeral eulogium on the Count Attilio, who had been carried off by the plague two days before.

In walking home he felt a languor, a depression, a weakness in his limbs, a difficulty of breathing, and an inward burning heat, which he would willingly have attributed entirely to the wine, to late hours, to the season. He uttered not a syllable the whole way; and the first word was, when they reached the house, to order Griso to light him to his room. When they were there, Griso observed the wild and heated look of his master's face, his eyes almost starting from their sockets, and peculiarly brilliant: he kept, therefore, at a distance; for, in these circumstances, every ragamuffin was obliged to look out for himself.

"I'm well, you see," said Don Rodrigo, who read in Griso's action the thoughts which were passing in his mind. "I'm very well; but I've taken, perhaps, a little too much to drink. There was some capital wine! But with a good night's sleep, it will go off. I'm very sleepy. Take that light away from before my eyes, it dazzles me; it teases me!"

"It's all the effects of the wine," said Griso, still keeping at a distance; "but lie down quickly, for sleep will do you good."

"You're right; if I can sleep. After all, I'm well enough. Put that little bell close by my bed, if I should want anything in the night: and be on the watch, you know, perchance you should hear me ring. But I sha'n't want anything. Take away that cursed light directly," resumed he, while Griso executed the order, approaching him as little as possible. Griso then took the light, and

wishing his master good night, took a hasty departure, while Rodrigo buried himself under the bedclothes.

But the counterpane seemed to him like a mountain. He threw it off, and tried to compose himself to rest; for, in fact, he was dying of sleep. But hardly had he closed his eyes, when he awoke again with a start, as if some wickedly-disposed person were giving him a shake; and he felt an increase of burning heat, an increase of delirium.

After a long battle, he at length fell asleep, and began to dream the most gloomy and disquieting dreams in the world. He went on from one thing to another, till he seemed to find himself in a large church, in the first ranks, in the midst of a great crowd of people. He looked at the bystanders; they had all pale emaciated countenances, with staring and glistening eyes, and hanging lips; their garments were tattered, and falling to pieces; and through the rents appeared livid spots and swellings. "Make room, you rabble!" he fancied he cried, drawing up his body to avoid coming in contact with those polluted creatures, who crowded only too closely upon him on every side. But not one of the senseless beings seemed to move; they pressed still more upon him; and, above all, it felt as if some one of them with his elbow, or whatever it might be, was pushing against his left side, between the heart and the arm-pit, where he felt a painful and heavy pressure. And if he writhed himself to get rid of this uneasy feeling, immediately a fresh unknown something began to prick him in the very same place. Enraged, he attempted to lay his hand on his sword; and then it seemed as if the thronging of the multitude had raised it up level with his chest, and that it was the hilt of it which pressed so in that spot; and the moment he touched it he felt a still sharper stitch. Don Rodrigo then himself lifted up his hand in fury, and making an effort to throw him-

self forward, he burst forth in a great howl and awoke. He dropped the arm he had lifted, strove, with some difficulty, to recover the right meaning of everything, and to open his eyes, for the light of the already advanced day gave him no less uneasiness than that of the candle; recognized his bed and his chamber; understood that all had been a dream, all, but one thing—that pain in his left side. He felt a frightful acceleration of palpitation at the heart, a noise and humming in his ears, a raging fire within, and a weight in all his limbs, worse than when he lay down. He hesitated a little before looking at the spot that pained him; at length, he uncovered it, and glanced at it with a shudder:—there was a hideous spot, of a livid purple hue.

The man saw himself lost; the terror of death seized him, and, with perhaps still stronger feeling, the terror of becoming the prey of the monatti, of being carried off, of being thrown into the Lazzeretto. He grasped the bell, and shook it violently. Griso, who was on the alert, immediately answered its summons. He stood at some distance from the bed, gazed attentively at his master, and was at once convinced of what he had conjectured the night before.

"Griso!" said Don Rodrigo, with difficulty raising himself, and sitting up in his bed, "you have always been my trusty servant."

"Yes, Signor."

"I have always dealt well by you."

"Of your bounty."

"I think I may trust you. I am ill, Griso."

"I had perceived it."

"If I recover, I will heap upon you more favors than I have ever yet done."

Griso made no answer, and stood waiting to see to what all these preambles would lead.

"I will not trust myself to anybody but you," resumed Don Rodrigo; "do me a kindness, Griso."

"Command me," said he, replying with his usual formula to that unusual one.

"Do you know where the surgeon, Chiodo, lives?"

"I know very well."

"He is a worthy man, who, if he is well paid, will conceal the sick. Go and find him; tell him I will give him four, six scudi a visit; more, if he demands more. Tell him to come here directly; and do the thing cleverly, so that nobody may observe it."

"Well thought of," said Griso; "I go, and return."

"Listen, Griso; give me a drop of water first. I am so parched with thirst, I can bear it no longer."

"Signor, no," replied Griso; "nothing without the doctor's leave. These are ticklish complaints; there is no time to be lost. Keep quiet—in the twinkling of an eye I'll be here with Chiodo."

So saying, he went out, impatiently shutting the door behind him.

Don Rodrigo lay down, and accompanied him, in imagination, to Chiodo's house, counting the steps, calculating the time. Now and then he would turn to look at his left side, but quickly averted his face with a shudder. After some time, he began to listen eagerly for the surgeon's arrival; and this effort of attention suspended his sense of illness, and kept his thoughts in some degree of order. Suddenly he heard a distant sound, which seemed, however, to come from the rooms, not the street. He listened still more intently; he heard it louder, more quickly repeated; and with it a trampling of footsteps. A horrid suspicion rushed into his mind. He sat up, and gave still greater attention; he heard a heavy thud in the next room as if a weight were being cautiously set down. He threw his legs out of bed, as if to get up; peeped at the door, saw it open, and beheld before his

eyes, and advancing toward him, in one word, two monatti. He distinguished, too, half of Griso's face, who, hidden behind the almost closed door, remained there on the lookout.

"Ah, infamous traitor! Begone, you rascals! Biondino! Carlotto! help! I'm murdered!" shouted Don Rodrigo. He thrust one hand under the bolster in search of a pistol; grasped it; drew it out; but, at his first cry, the monatti had rushed to the bed; the foremost is upon him before he can do anything further; he wrenches the pistol out of his hand, throws it to a distance, forces him to lie down again, and keeps him there, crying with a grin of fury mingled with contempt: "Ah, villain! against the monatti! against the officers of the Board! against those who perform works of mercy."

"Hold him fast till we carry him off," said his companion, going toward a small chest. Griso then entered, and began with him to force open the lock.

"Scoundrel!" howled Don Rodrigo, looking at him from under the fellow who held him down, and writhing himself under the grasp of his sinewy arms. "First let me kill that infamous rascal!" said he to the monatti, "and afterward do with me what you will." Then he began to shout with loud cries to his other servants: but in vain he called; for the abominable Griso had sent them all off with pretended orders from their master himself, before going to propose to the monatti to come on this expedition and divide the spoil.

"Be quiet, will you?" said the villain who held him down upon the bed, to the unfortunate Don Rodrigo. And turning his face to the two who were seizing the booty, he cried to them, "Do your work like honest fellows."

"You! you!" roared Don Rodrigo to Griso, whom he beheld busying himself in breaking open, taking out money and clothes, and dividing them. "You! after—Ah,

fiend of hell! I may still recover!" Griso spoke not, nor, more than he could help, even turned in the direction whence these words proceeded.

"Hold him fast," said the other monatto; "he's frantic."

The miserable being became so indeed. After one last and more violent effort of cries and contortions, he suddenly sank down senseless in a swoon; he still, however, stared fixedly, as if spellbound; and from time to time gave a feeble struggle, or uttered a kind of howl.

The monatti took him, one by the feet and the other by the shoulders, and went to deposit him on a handbarrow which they had left in the adjoining room; afterward one returned to fetch the booty; and then, taking up their miserable burden, they carried all away.

Leaving Rodrigo, for the present, in the abode of suffering, we must now go in search of another, whose history never would have been blended with his, had it not been forced upon him whether he would or not; indeed we may safely say, that neither one nor the other would have had any history at all:—I mean Renzo, whom we left in the new silkmill under the assumed name of Antonio Rivolta.

He had been there about five or six months, when, enmity having been openly declared between the Republic and the King of Spain, and therefore every apprehension of trouble from that quarter ceasing, Bortolo went to fetch him away, and take him again into his own employment, both because he was fond of him, and because Renzo, being naturally intelligent and skilful in the trade, was of great use to the factotum in a manufactory, without ever being able to aspire to that office himself, from his inability to write.

From that time Renzo continued to work with him. More than once or twice, and especially after having received one of those charming letters from Agnese, he had felt a great fancy to enlist as a soldier, and make an end of

it; nor were opportunities wanting; for during that interval, the Republic often stood in need of men. The temptation had sometimes been the more pressing to Renzo, because they even talked of invading the Milanese; and it naturally appeared to him that it would be a fine thing to return in the guise of a conqueror to his own home, to see Lucia again, and for once come to an explanation with her. But, by clever management, Bortolo had always contrived to divert him from the resolution.

At other times Renzo resolved to go secretly, disguised and under a false name. But from this project, too, Bortolo always contrived to divert him with arguments that may be too easily conjectured.

The plague, having afterward broken out in the Milanese territory, and even, as we have said, on the confines of the Bergamascan, it was not long before it extended itself hither. Renzo took the plague, and cured himself, that is to say, he did nothing; he was at the point of death, but his good constitution conquered the strength of the malady: in a few days he was out of danger. With the return of life, its cares, its wishes, hopes, recollections, and designs, were renewed with double poignancy and vigor; which is equivalent to saying that he thought more than ever of Lucia. What had become of her, during the time that life was, as it were, an exception? And at so short a distance from her, could he learn nothing? And to remain, God knew how long! in such a state of uncertainty! And even when this should be removed, when all danger being over, he should learn that Lucia still survived; there would always remain that other knot, that obscurity about the vow.—"I'll go myself; I'll go and learn about everything at once," said he to himself, and he said it before he was again in a condition to steady himself upon his feet. "Provided she lives! Ah, if she lives! I'll find her, that I will; I'll hear once from her own

lips what this promise is, I'll make her see that it can not hold good, and I'll bring her away with me, her, and that poor Agnese, if she's living! who has always wished me well, and I'm sure she does so still. If I let so good an opportunity pass, I may never have such another!"

For several days Renzo practised taking a little exercise, to assay and recruit his strength; and no sooner did he deem himself capable of performing the journey, than he prepared to set out. Under his clothes he buckled a girdle round his waist, containing those fifty scudi upon which he had never laid a finger, and which he had never confided to any one, not even to Bortolo; he took a few more pence with him, which he had saved day after day by living very economically; put under his arm a small bundle of clothes, and in his pocket a recommendation, with the name of Antonio Rivolta, which had been very willingly given him by his second master; in one pocket of his trousers he placed a large knife, the least that an honest man could carry in those days; and set off on his peregrinations, on the last day of August, three days after Don Rodrigo had been carried to the Lazzeretto.

Toward evening he reached his own village. At this sight, though he must have been prepared for it, he felt his heart beginning to beat violently. He experienced still stronger agitation on entering the churchyard; and worse still awaited him at the end of his walk; for the spot he had fixed upon as his resting-place was the dwelling which he had once been accustomed to call Lucia's cottage. Now it could not be, at the best, more than Agnese's; and the only favor he begged of Heaven was, that he might find her living and in health. And in this cottage he proposed asking for a bed, rightly conjecturing that his own would no longer be a place of abode for anything but rats.

To reach that point, therefore, without passing through

the village, he took a little by-path that ran behind it, the very one along which he had gone, in good company, on that notorious night when he tried to surprise the curate. About halfway stood, on one side, his own house, and on the other his vineyard; so that he could enter both for a moment in passing, to see a little how his own affairs were going on.

Suddenly he beheld, turning a familiar corner, and advancing toward him, a black object, which he quickly recognized as Don Abbondio. He walked slowly, and the nearer he approached, the more plainly might be discerned, in his pale and emaciated countenance that he, too, had had to pass through his share of the storm. He looked askance at Renzo; it seemed, and it did not seem, like him; there was something like a stranger in his dress; but it was a stranger from the territory of Bergamo.

Renzo hastened to meet him, and made a low reverence; for, although they had quitted each other in the way the reader knows, he was always, nevertheless, his curate.

"Are you here—you?" exclaimed the latter.

"I am indeed, as you see. Do you know anything of Lucia?"

"What do you suppose I can know? I know nothing. She's at Milan, if she's still in this world. But you"—

"And Agnese, is she alive?"

"She may be; but who do you suppose can tell? She's not here. But"—

"Where is she?"

"She's gone to live at Valsassina, among her relatives at Pasturo, you know; for they say the plague doesn't make the havoc there it does here. But you, I say"—

"Oh, I'm very sorry. And Father Cristoforo?"

"He's been gone for some time. But—"

"I know that, they wrote and told me so much; but I

want to know if he hasn't yet returned to these parts."

"Nay; they've heard nothing further about him. But you"—

"I'm very sorry to hear this too."

"But you, I say, what, for Heaven's sake, are you coming to do in this part of the world? Don't you know about that affair of your apprehension?"

"What does it matter? They've something else to think about. I was determined to come for once, and see about my affairs."

"What would you see about, I wonder? for now there's no longer anybody, or anything. And is it wise of you, with that business of your apprehension, to come hither exactly to your own village, into the wolf's very mouth? Do you think that this is the air for you? Don't you know they've been to look for you? that they've ransacked everything, and turned all upside down?"

"I know it too well, the scoundrels!"

"But then"—

"But if I tell you I don't care! And is that fellow alive yet? is he here?"

"I tell you nobody's here; I tell you, you mustn't think about things here; tell you"—

"I ask if he's here?"

"Oh, sacred Heaven! Speak more quietly. Is it possible you've all that fierceness about you after so many things have happened?"

"Is he here, or is he not?"

"Well, well, he's not here. But the plague, my son, the plague! Who would go traveling about in such times as these?"

"If there was nothing else but the plague in this world. I mean for myself: I've had it, and am free."

"Indeed! what news is this? When one has escaped a danger of this sort, it seems to me he should thank Heaven."

"And so I do, and so I have said, over and over again."

"And not go to look for others, I say. Do as I advise."

"You've had it too, Signor Curato, if I mistake not."

"I had it! Obstinate and bad enough it was! I'm here by miracle; I need only say that it has left me in the state you see. Now, I had just need of a little quiet, to set me to rights again. I was beginning to be a little better. In the name of Heaven, what have you come to do here? Go back!"

"You're always at me with that *go back*. As for going back, I have reasons enough for not stirring. You say, what are you come for? I've come home."

"I understand," said Don Abbondio, sighing pettishly, "I understand. You would ruin yourself and me too. You haven't gone through enough already, I suppose; and I haven't gone through enough either. I understand, I understand." And continuing to mutter these last words, he again resumed his way.

Renzo stood there, chagrined and discontented, thinking where he could find a lodging. In the funereal list recounted by Don Abbondio, there was a family of peasants, who had been all swept off by the pestilence, except one youth, about Renzo's own age, who had been his companion from infancy; the house was out of the village, a little distance off. Hither he determined to bend his steps and ask for a night's lodging.

He had nearly reached his own vineyard, and was soon able to infer from the outside in what state it was. Not a single tree, not a single leaf, which he had left there was visible above the wall.

He had no heart to enter such a vineyard, and probably did not stand as long looking at it as we have taken to make this little sketch. He bent forward; a little way off stood his cottage; he passed through the garden and just set foot within the threshold of one of the rooms on the ground floor; at the sound of his footsteps, and

on his looking in, there was a hubbub, a scampering to and fro of rats, a rush under the rubbish that covered the whole floor; it was the relics of the German soldiers' beds. Nothing else was to be seen. He took his departure, too, from this desolate scene, returned through the garden, took another little lane to the left, and arrived close to the house he had designed as his place of lodging. It was already evening; his friend was seated outside the door on a small wooden bench, his arms crossed on his breast, and his eyes fixed upon the sky, like a man bewildered by misfortunes, and rendered savage by long solitude. Hearing a footstep, he turned round, looked to see who was coming, and to what he fancied he saw in the twilight, between the leaves and branches, cried in a loud voice, as he stood up and raised both hands: "Is there nobody but me? didn't I do enough yesterday? Let me alone a little, for that, too, will be a work of charity."

Renzo, not knowing what this meant, replied to him, calling him by name.

"Renzo?" said he, in a tone at once of exclamation and interrogation.

"Myself," said Renzo; and they hastened to meet each other.

"Is it really you?" said his friend, when they were near. "Oh, how glad I am to see you! Who would have thought it? I took you for Paolin de' Morti, who is always coming to torment me to go and bury some one. Do you know I am left alone?—alone! as a hermit!"

"I know it too well," said Renzo. And interchanging in this manner welcomings, questions, and answers, they went into the house together. Here, without interrupting the conversation, his friend busied himself in doing some little honor to his guest, as he best could on so sudden a warning, and in times like those. He set some water on the fire, and began to make the polenta; but soon gave

up the pestle to Renzo, that he might proceed with the mixing, and went out, saying, "I'm all by myself, you see."

By and by he returned with a small pail of milk, a little salt meat, a couple of cream-cheeses, and some figs and peaches; and all being ready, and the polenta poured out upon the trencher, they sat down to table, mutually thanking each other, one for the visit, the other for the reception he met with. And, after an absence of nearly two years, they suddenly discovered that they were much greater friends than they ever thought they were when they saw each other almost every day.

True, no one could supply the place of Agnese to Renzo, nor console him for her absence, not only on account of the old and special affection he entertained for her, but also because, among the things he was anxious to clear up, one there was of which she alone possessed the key. He stood for a moment in doubt whether he should not first go in search of her, since he was so short a distance off; but considering that she would know nothing of Lucia's health, he kept to his first intention of going at once to assure himself of this, to confront the one great trial, and afterward to bring the news to her mother. Even from his friend, however, he learned many things of which he was ignorant, and gained some light on many points with which he was but partially acquainted, both about Lucia's circumstances, the prosecutions instituted against himself, and Don Rodrigo's departure thence, followed by his whole suite, since which time he had not been seen in the neighborhood; in short, about all the intricate circumstances of the whole affair.

By break of day they were both downstairs; Renzo equipped for his journey, with his girdle hidden under his doublet, and the large knife in his pocket, but otherwise light and unencumbered, having left his little bundle

in the care of his host. "If all goes well with me," said he; "if I find her alive, I'll come back here; I'll run over to Pasturo to carry the good news to poor Agnese, and then, and then— But if, by ill-luck, which God forbid!— Then I don't know what I shall do; I don't know where I shall go: only, assuredly, you will never see me again in these parts!"

Renzo pursued his way deliberately and easily, as all he cared for was to reach the vicinity of Milan that day, so that he might enter next morning early, and immediately begin his search.

Toward evening he arrived at Greco, without, however, knowing its name; but, by the help of some little recollection of the places which he retained from his former journey, and his calculation of the distance he had already come from Monza, he guessed that he must be tolerably near the city, and therefore left the high-road and turned into the fields in search of some cascinotto, where he might pass the night; for with inns he was determined not to meddle. He found more than he looked for: for seeing a gap in the hedge which surrounded the yard of a cow-house, he resolved at any rate to enter. No one was there: he saw in one corner a large shed with hay piled up beneath it, and against this a ladder was reared; he once more looked round, and then, mounting at a venture, laid himself down to pass the night there, and quickly fell asleep, not to awake till morning. When he awoke, he crawled toward the edge of this great bed, put his head out, and seeing no one, descended as he had gone up, went out where he had come in, pursued his way through little by-paths, taking the cathedral for his polar star; and, after a short walk, came out under the walls of Milan, between the Porta Orientale and the Porta Nuova, and rather nearer to the latter.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE CITY OF TERROR

AS to the way of entering the city, Renzo had heard, in general terms, that there were very strict orders not to admit persons without a certificate of health; but that, in fact, it was easy enough for any one to effect an entrance who at all knew how to help himself, and to seize opportunities.

Renzo's intention was to attempt a passage at the first gate upon which he might happen to light; and if any obstacle presented itself, to go round outside, until he found another more easy of access. And Heaven knows how many gates he thought Milan must have!

Arrived, then, before the walls, he stood still to look about him, not knowing which was the best way to bend his steps.

Having stood thus for a moment, he took the right hand, at a venture, directing his steps, without being aware of it, toward the Porta Nuova, which, though close at hand, he had not been able to perceive, on account of a bastion behind which it was concealed. After taking a few steps, a tinkling of little bells fell upon his ear, which ceased and was renewed at intervals, and then the voices of men. He went forward; and having turned the corner of the bastion, the first thing that met his eye on the esplanade before the gate was a small wooden house, or sentry-box, at the doorway of which stood a guard, leaning on his musket with a languid and negligent air. Exactly before the opening stood a melancholy impediment—a handbarrow, placed upon the ground, on which two monatti were laying out a poor creature to bear him away: it was the head of the custom-house officers, in whom the plague had been discovered

just before. Renzo stood still where he was, awaiting the issue. The party being gone, and no one appearing to shut the gate again, now seemed to be his time; he hastened forward; but the ill-looking sentinel called out to him: "Halt!" He instantly stopped, and winking at the man, drew out a half-ducat, and showed it to him. The fellow, either having already had the pestilence, or fearing it less than he loved half-ducats, beckoned to Renzo to throw it to him; and soon seeing it roll at his feet, muttered, "Go forward, quickly." Renzo gave him no occasion to repeat the order; he passed the palisade, entered the gate, and went forward without any one observing or taking any notice of him.

At every step he heard increasing a peculiar noise of wheels and horses, with a tinkling of little bells, and every now and then a cracking of whips, and loud vociferations. He looked before him, but saw nothing. Having reached the end of the winding street, and got a view of the square of San Marco, the objects which first met his eye were two erect beams, with a rope and sundry pulleys, which he failed not immediately to recognize (for it was a familiar spectacle in those days) as the abominable instrument of torture. It was erected in that place (and not only there, but in all the squares and most spacious streets), in order that the deputies of every quarter, furnished with this most arbitrary of all means, might be able to apply it immediately to any one whom they should deem deserving of punishment, whether it were sequestrated persons who left their houses, or officers rebelling against orders, and whatever else it might be.

While Renzo was contemplating this machine, wondering why it was erected in that place, and listening to the close-approaching sound, he saw appearing from behind the corner of the church a man ringing a little bell: it was an *apparitore;* and behind him came two horses,

which, stretching their necks and pawing with their hoofs, could with difficulty make their way; and drawn by these was a cart full of dead bodies, and after that another, and then another, and another; and on each hand monatti walking by the side of the horses, hastening them on with whips, blows, and curses. These corpses were for the most part naked, while some were miserably enveloped in tattered sheets, and were heaped up and twined together, almost like a nest of snakes slowly unfolding themselves to the warmth of a mild spring day; so that at every trifling obstacle, at every jolt, these fatal groups were seen shivering and falling into horrible confusion, heads dangling down, women's long tresses disheveled, arms torn off and striking against the wheels, exhibiting to the already horror-stricken view how such a spectacle may become still more wretched and disgraceful.

The youth had paused at the corner of the square, by the side of the railing of the canal, and was praying, meanwhile, for these unknown dead. A horrible thought flashed across his mind:—Perhaps there, among these, beneath them!....O Lord! let it not be true! help me not to think of it!

The funeral procession having disappeared, he moved on, crossing the square, and taking the street along the left-hand side of the canal. After going a few steps between the side of the church and the canal, he saw to the right the brige Marcellino; he crossed it, and by that oblique passage arrived in the street of the Borgo Nuovo. Casting his eyes forward, on the constant lookout for some one of whom he might ask direction, he saw at the other end of the street a priest clothed in a doublet, with a small stick in his hand, standing near a half-open door, with his head bent, and his ear at the aperture; and very soon afterward he saw him raise his hand to pronounce a blessing. He guessed—what in fact was the

case—that the had just finished confessing some one; and said to himself: "This is my man. If a priest, in the exercise of his functions, hasn't a little charity, a little good-nature and kindness, I can only say there is none left in the world."

In the mean while the priest, leaving the doorway, advanced toward Renzo, walking with much caution in the middle of the road. When he was within four or five paces of him, Renzo took off his hat and signified that he wanted to speak to him, stopping, at the same time, so as to let him understand that he would not approach too indiscreetly. The priest also paused, with the air of one prepared to listen, planting his stick, however, on the ground before him, to serve, as it were, for a kind of bulwark. Renzo proposed his inquiries as to the dwelling of Don Ferrante, which the good priest readily satisfied, not only telling him the name of the street where the house was situated, but giving him also a little direction as to his way; pointing out to him those other six or eight streets he had yet to traverse before reaching the one he was inquiring after.

"God keep you in good health, both in these days and always!" said Renzo, and making a bow he pursued his way, and tried, as he went along, to recapitulate the instructions he had received, that he might be obliged as seldom as possible to ask further directions.

Renzo happened to have to pass through one of the most unsightly and desolated quarters of the city; that junction of streets known by the name of the Carrobio of the Porta Nuova. Such had been the virulence of the contagion, and the infection of the scattered corpses in this neighborhood, that the few survivors had been obliged to remove; so that while the passer-by was stunned with such a spectacle of solitude and desertion, more than one sense was only too grievously incommoded and offended by the tokens and relics of recent

habitation. Renzo quickened his steps, consoling himself with the thought that the end of his search could not yet be at hand, and hoping that before he arrived at it, he would find the scene, at least in part, changed; and, in fact, a little further on, he came out into a part which might still be called the city of the living—but what a city, and what living! All the doorways into the streets were kept shut from either suspicion or alarm, except those which were left open because deserted or invaded; others were nailed up and sealed outside, on account of the sick, or dead, who lay within; others marked with a cross drawn with coal, as an intimation to the monatti that there were dead to be carried away. Everywhere were rags and corrupted bandages, infected straw, or clothes, or sheets, thrown from the windows; sometimes bodies, which had suddenly fallen dead in the streets, and were left there till a cart happened to pass by and pick them up, or shaken from off the carts themselves, or even thrown from the windows.

Renzo had already gone some distance on his way through the midst of this desolation, when he heard, proceeding from a street a few yards off, into which he had been directed to turn, a confused noise, in which he readily distinguished the usual horrible tinkling.

At the entrance of the street, which was one of the most spacious, he perceived four carts standing in the middle; and as in a corn-market there is a constant hurrying to and fro of people, and an emptying and filling of sacks, such was the bustle here; monatti intruding into houses, monatti coming out, bearing a burden upon their shoulders, which they placed upon one or other of the carts; some in red livery, others without that distinction: many with another still more odious, plumes and cloaks of various colors, which these miserable wretches wore in the midst of the general mourning, as if in honor of a festival. From time to time the mournful cry re-

sounded from one of the windows, "Here, monatti!" And, with a still more wretched sound, a harsh voice rose from this horrible source in reply, "Coming directly!"

Renzo advanced, oppressed at heart by one sad and gloomy foreboding. Having reached the spot where the two streets crossed, he beheld a confused multitude advancing from one side, and stood still to wait till it had passed. It was a party of sick on their way to the Lazzeretto; some driven thither by force, vainly offering resistance, vainly crying that they would rather die upon their beds, and replying with impotent imprecations to the oaths and commands of the monatti who were conducting them; others who walked on in silence, without any apparent grief and without hope, like insensible beings; women with infants clinging to their bosoms; children, terrified by the cries, the mandates, and the crowd, more than by the confused idea of death, with loud cries demanding their mother and her trusted embrace, and imploring that they might remain at their well-known homes. Alas! perhaps their mother, whom they supposed they had left asleep upon her bed, had there thrown herself down senseless, subdued in a moment by the disease, to be carried away on a cart to the Lazzeretto—or the grave, if perchance the car should arrive a little later.

In the midst of the sadness and emotions of tenderness excited by these spectacles, a far different solicitude pressed more closely on our traveler, and held him in painful suspense. The house must be near at hand, and who knew whether among these people—But the crowd having all passed by, and this doubt being removed, he turned to a monatto who was walking behind, and asked him for the street and dwelling of Don Ferrante. The commissary, pointing with a stick in the direction whence he had come, said, "The first street to the right, the last gentleman's house on the left."

He approached the closed door, placed his hand on the knocker, and held it there in suspense. At length he raised the hammer, and gave a resolute knock.

In a moment or two a window was slightly opened, and a woman appeared at it to peep out, looking toward the door with a suspicious countenance, which seemed to say—Monatti? robbers? commissaries? poisoners? devils?

"Signora," said Renzo, looking upward, in a somewhat tremulous tone, "is there a young country girl here at service, named Lucia?"

"She's here no longer; go away," answered the woman, preparing to shut the window.

"One moment, for pity's sake! She's no longer here? Where is she?"

"At the Lazzeretto;" and she was again about to close the window.

"But one moment, for Heaven's sake! With the pestilence?"

"To be sure. Something new, eh? Get you gone."

"Oh, stay! Was she very ill? How long is it?"

But this time the window was closed in reality.

Afflicted by this intelligence, and vexed with the treatment he had received, Renzo again seized the knocker, and standing close to the door, kept squeezing and twisting it in his hand, then lifted it to knock again, in a kind of despair, and paused, in act to strike. In this agitation of feeling, he turned to see if his eye could catch any person near at hand, from whom he might, perhaps, receive some more sober information, some direction, some light. But the first, the only person he discovered was another woman, distant, perhaps, about twenty yards; who, with a look full of horror, hatred, impatience, and malice, with a certain wild expression of eye which betrayed an attempt to look at him and something else at a distance at the same time, with a

mouth opened as if on the point of shouting as loud as she could; but holding even her breath, raising two thin, bony arms, and extending and drawing back two wrinkled and clenched hands, as if reaching to herself something, gave evident signs of wishing to call people without letting somebody perceive it. On their eyes encountering each other, she, looking still more hideous, started like one taken by surprise.

"What the?"—— began Renzo, raising his fist toward the woman; but she, having lost all hope of being able to have him unexpectedly seized, gave utterance to the cry she had hitherto restrained: "The poisoner! seize him! seize him! seize him! the poisoner!"

"Who? I! ah, you lying old witch! hold your tongue there!" cried Renzo; and he sprang toward her to frighten her and make her silent. He perceived, however, at this moment, that he must rather look after himself. At the screams of the woman people flocked from both sides; not the crowds, indeed, which, in a similar case, would have collected three months before; but still more than enough to crush a single individual. At this very instant, the window was again thrown open, and the same woman who had shown herself so uncourteous just before, displayed herself this time in full, and cried out, "Take him, take him; for he must be one of those wicked wretches who go about to anoint the doors of gentlefolks."

Renzo determined in an instant that it would be a better course to make his escape from them, than stay to clear himself; he cast an eye on each side to see where were fewest people; and in that direction took to his legs. The street was clear before him; but behind his back he heard resounding more and more loudly the savage cry, "Seize him! seize him! a poisoner!" he heard, drawing nearer and nearer, the footsteps of the swiftest among his pursuers. His anger became fury, his anguish was

changed into desperation; a cloud seemed gathering over his eyes; he seized hold of his poniard, unsheathed it, stopped, drew himself up, turned round a more fierce and savage face than he had ever before put on in his whole life; and, brandishing in the air, with outstretched arm, the glittering blade, exclaimed, "Let him who dares come forward, you rascals! and I'll anoint him with this, in earnest."

But, with astonishment and a confused feeling of relief, he perceived that his persecutors had already stopped at some distance, as if in hesitation, and that while they continued shouting after him, they were beckoning with uplifted hands, like people possessed and terrified out of their senses, to others at some distance beyond him. He again turned round, and beheld a file of the usual funeral carts, with their usual accompaniments; and beyond them another small band of people, who were ready, on their part, to fall upon the poisoner, and take him in the midst; these, however, were also restrained by the same impediment. Finding himself thus between two fires, it occurred to him that what was to them a cause of terror might be for himself a means of safety; he thought that this was not a time for squeamish scruples; so again sheathing his poniard, he drew a little on one side, resumed his way toward the carts, and passing by the first, remarked in the second a tolerably empty space. He took aim, sprang up, and landed with his right foot in the cart, his left in the air, and his arms stretched forward.

"Bravo! bravo!" exclaimed the monatti with one voice, some of whom were following the convoy on foot, others were seated on the carts; and others, to tell the horrible fact as it really was, on the dead bodies, quaffing from a large flask which was going the round of the party. "Bravo! a capital hit!"

"You've come to put yourself under the protection of

the monatti: you may reckon yourself as safe as in church," said one of the two who were seated on the cart upon which he had thrown himself.

The greater part of his enemies had, on the approach of the train, turned their backs upon him and fled, crying at the same time, "Seize him! seize him! a poisoner!" Some few of them, however, retired more deliberately, stopping every now and then, and turning with a hideous grin of rage and threatening gestures toward Renzo, who replied to them from the cart by shaking his fist at them.

"Leave it to me," said a monatto; and tearing a filthy rag from one of the bodies, he hastily tied it in a knot, and taking it by one of its ears, raised it like a sling toward these obstinate fellows, and pretended to hurl it at them, crying, "Here, you rascals!" At this action they all fled in horror; and Renzo saw nothing but the backs of his enemies, and heels which bounded rapidly through the air, like the hammers in a clothier's mill.

A howl of triumph arose among the monatti, a stormy burst of laughter, a prolonged "Eh!" as an accompaniment, so to say, to this fugue.

"Aha! look if we don't know how to protect honest fellows!" said the same monatto to Renzo; "one of us is worth more than a hundred of those cowards!"

"Certainly, I may say I owe you my life," replied he; "and I thank you with all my heart."

"Not a word, not a word," answered the monatto; "you deserve it; one can see you're a brave young fellow. You do right to poison these rascals; anoint away, extirpate all those who are good for nothing, except when they're dead; for in reward for the life we lead, they only curse us, and keep saying that when the pestilence is over, they'll have us all hanged. They must be finished before the pestilence; the monatti only must be left to chant victory and revel in Milan."

"Long live the pestilence, and death to the rabble!"

exclaimed the other; and with this beautiful toast he put the flask to his mouth, and holding it with both his hands amid the joltings of the cart, took a long draught, and then handed it to Renzo, saying, "Drink to our health."

"I wish it you all, with my whole heart," said Renzo, "but I'm not thirsty; I don't feel any inclination to drink just now."

"You've had a fine fright, it seems," said the monatto. "You look like a harmless creature enough; you should have another face than that to be a poisoner."

"Let everybody do as he can," said the other.

"Here, give it me," said one of those on foot at the side of the car, "for I, too, want to drink another cup to the health of his honor, who finds himself in such capital company—there, there, just there, among that elegant carriage-full."

And amid the loud laughs of his companions, he took the flask, and lifted it up, but, before drinking, turned to Renzo, fixed his eyes on his face, and said to him, with a certain air of scornful compassion: "The devil, with whom you have made agreement, must be very young; for if we hadn't been by to rescue you, he'd have given you mighty assistance." And amid a fresh burst of laughter, he applied the flagon to his lips.

On turning a corner Renzo recognized the place along which they were about to pass; he looked more attentively, and at once knew it by more certain signs. He was in the direct course to the Porta Orientale, in that very street along which he had gone so slowly, and returned so speedily, about twenty months before. He quickly remembered that from thence he could go straight to the Lazzeretto; and this finding of himself in the right way without any endeavor of his own, and without direction, he looked upon as a special token of Divine guidance, and a good omen of what remained. At that

moment a commissary came to meet the cars, who called out to the monatti to stop, and I know not what besides: it need only be said that they came to a halt. One of the monatti seated on Renzo's car jumped down: Renzo said to the other, "Thank you for your kindness; God reward you for it!" and sprang down at the opposite side.

"Get you gone, poor poisoner," replied the man; "you'll not be the fellow that'll ruin Milan!"

Fortunately no one was at hand who could overhear him. The party had stopped on the left hand of the street: Renzo hastily crossed over to the opposite side; and, keeping close to the wall, trudged onward toward the bridge; crossed it; followed the well-known street of the Borgo, and recognized the Convent of the Capuchins; he came close to the gates, saw the projecting corner of the Lazzeretto, passed through the palisade, and the scene outside the enclosure was laid open to his view.

Along the two sides all was bustle and confusion; there was a great concourse; an influx and reflux of people; sick flocking in crowds to the Lazzeretto; some sitting or lying on the edge of one or the other of the moats that flanked the road, whose strength had proved insufficient to carry them within their place of retreat, or, when they had abandoned it in despair, had equally failed to convey them further away. Others were wandering about as if stupefied; and not a few were absolutely beside themselves: one would be eagerly relating his fancies to a miserable creature laboring under the malady; another would be actually raving; while a third appeared with a smiling countenance, as if assisting at some gay spectacle.

Confounded and weary with the sight of so much misery, Renzo arrived at the gate of that abode where perhaps more was concentrated than had been scattered over the whole space it had yet been his fortune to tra-

verse. He walked up to the door, entered under the vaulted roof, and stood for a moment in the middle of the portico without moving.

CHAPTER XXXV

RENZO FORGIVES HIS ENEMY

LET the reader imagine the enclosure of the Lazzeretto peopled with sixteen thousand persons ill of the plague; the whole area encumbered, here with tents and cabins, there with carts, elsewhere with people; those two interminable ranges of portico to the right and left, covered, crowded, with dead or dying, stretched upon mattresses, or the bare straw; and throughout the whole of this, so to say, immense den, a commotion, a fluctuation, like the swell of the sea; and within, people coming and going, stopping and running, some sinking under disease, others rising from their sick beds convalescent, frantic, or to attend upon others.

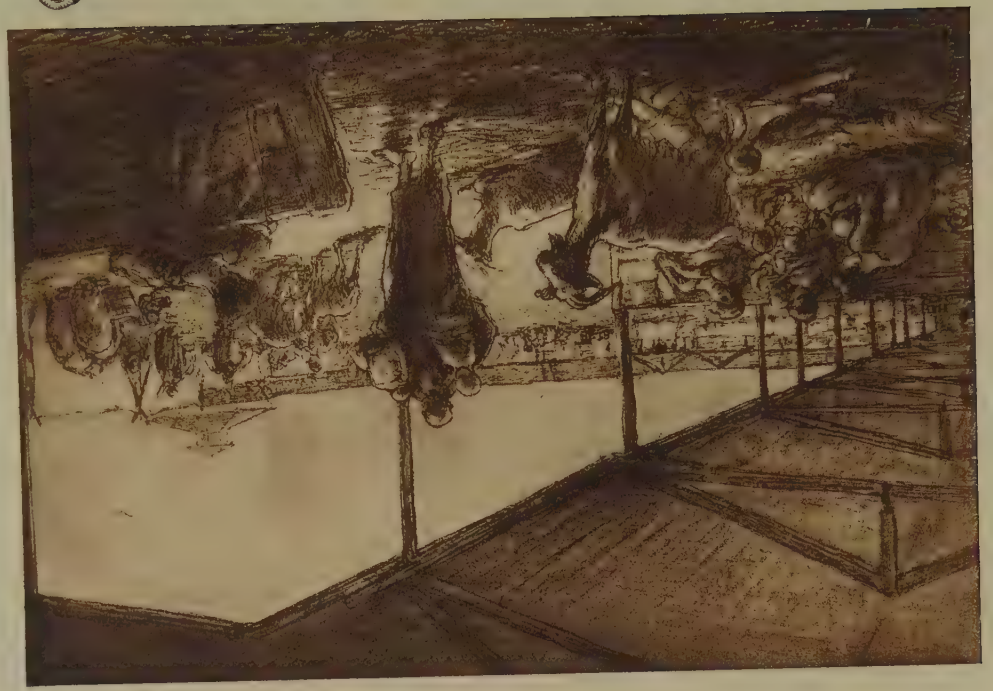
From the gate where Renzo stood, up to the temple in the middle, and from that again to the opposite gate, ran a kind of pathway free from cabins, and, at a second glance, he observed a great bustle of removing carts, and making the way clear, and discovered officers and Capuchins directing this operation, at the same time dismissing all those who had no business there. Fearing lest he also should be turned out in this manner, he slipped in between the pavilions.

He went forward, according as he found room to set his foot, from cabin to cabin, popping his head into each, casting his eye upon every one who lay outside, gazing upon countenances broken down by suffering, contracted by spasm, or motionless in death, perchance he might happen to find that one which, nevertheless, he dreaded to find. He had already, however, gone some consider-

able distance, and often and often repeated this melancholy inspection, without having yet seen a single woman; he concluded, therefore, that these must be lodged in a separate quarter.

The youth had already threaded his way for some time without success through this maze of cabins, when, in the variety of lamentations and confused murmurs, he began to distinguish a singular intermixture of bleatings and infants' cries. He arrived at length before a cracked and disjointed wooden partition, from within which this extraordinary sound proceeded; and peeping through a large aperture between two boards, he beheld an enclosure scattered throughout with little huts, and in these, as well as in the spaces of the small camp between the cabins, not the usual occupants of an infirmary, but infants, lying upon little beds, pillows, sheets, or cloths spread upon the ground, and nurses and other women busily attending upon them; and, which above everything else attracted and engrossed his attention, she-goats mingled with these, and acting as their coadjutrices: a hospital of innocents, such as the place and times could afford. It was a novel sight to behold some of these animals standing quietly over this or that infant, giving it suck, and another hastening at the cry of the child, as if endued with maternal feeling, and stopping by the side of the little claimant, contriving to dispose itself over the infant, and bleating and fidgeting, almost as if demanding some one to come to the assistance of both.

Here and there nurses were seated with infants at the breast. One of these, with deep sorrow depicted in her countenance, drew from her breast a poor weeping little creature, and mournfully went to look for an animal which might be able to supply her place; another regarded with a compassionate look the little one asleep on her bosom, and gently kissing it, went to lay it on a bed



in one of the cabins; while a third, surrendering her breast to the stranger suckling, with an air not of negligence, but of preoccupation, gazed fixedly up to heaven.

Other women, of more experience, supplied different offices. One would run at the cry of a famished child, lift it from the ground, and carry it to a goat, feeding upon a heap of fresh herbage; and applying it to the creature's paps, would chide, and, at the same time, coax the inexperienced animal with her voice, that it might quietly lend itself to its new office; another would spring forward to drive off a goat which was trampling a poor babe, in its eagerness to suckle another; while a third was carrying about her own infant, rocking it in her arms, now trying to lull it to sleep by singing, now to pacify it with soothing words, and calling it by a name she had herself given it. At this moment a Capuchin, with a very white beard, arrived, bringing two screaming infants, one in each arm, which he had just taken from their dying mothers; and a woman ran to receive them, and went to seek among the crowd, and in the flocks, some one would supply the place of a mother.

At last Renzo left the place, and went on close along the partition, until a group of huts, which were propped against it, compelled him to turn aside. He then went round the cabins, with the intention of regaining the partition, turning the corner of the enclosure, and making some fresh discoveries. But while he was looking forward to reconnoiter his way, a sudden apparition struck his eye, and put him in great agitation. He saw, about a hundred yards off, a Capuchin threading his way and quickly becoming lost among the pavilions: a Capuchin, who, even thus passingly, and at a distance, had all the bearing, motions, and figure of Father Cristoforo. With frantic eagerness he sprang forward in that direction, looking here and there, winding about, backward, forward, inside and out, by circles, and through narrow

passages, until he again saw, with increased joy, the form of the self-same friar; he saw him at a little distance, just leaving a large boiling pot, and going with a porringer in his hand toward a cabin; then he beheld him seat himself in the doorway, make the sign of the cross on the basin he held before him, and, looking around him, like one constantly on the alert, begin to eat. It was, indeed, Father Cristoforo.

The history of the friar, from the point at which we lost sight of him up to the present meeting, may be told in a few words. He had never removed from Rimini, nor even thought of removing, until the plague, breaking out in Milan, afforded him the opportunity he had long so earnestly desired, of sacrificing his life for his fellow-creatures. He urgently entreated that he might be recalled from Rimini to assist and attend upon the infected patients. The Count, Attilio's uncle, was dead; and besides, the times required tenders of the sick rather than politicians; so that his request was granted without difficulty. He came immediately to Milan, entered the Lazzeretto, and had now been there about three months.

He kept his eye fixed on the youth who was approaching him, and who was seeking by gestures (not daring to do so with his voice) to make him distinguish and recognize him. "Oh, Father Cristoforo!" said he, at last, when he was near enough to be heard without shouting.

"You here!" said the friar, setting the porringer on the ground, and rising from his seat.

"How are you, Father?—how are you?"

"Better than the many poor creatures you see," replied the friar; and his voice was feeble, hollow, and as changed as everything else about him. His eye alone was what it always was, or had something about it even more bright and resplendent; as if Charity, elevated by the approaching end of her labors, and exulting in the

consciousness of being near her source, restored to it a more ardent and purer fire than that which infirmity was every hour extinguishing. "But you," pursued he, "how is it you're in this place? What makes you come thus to brave the pestilence?"

"I've had it, thank Heaven! I come to seek for Lucia."

"Lucia? Is Lucia here?"

"She is; at least, I hope in God she may still be here."

"Is she your wife?"

"Oh, my dear Father! My wife! no, that she's not. Don't you know anything of what has happened?"

"No, my son; since God removed me to a distance from you, I've never heard anything further; but now that He has sent you to me, I'll tell you the truth, that I wish very much to know. But what about the sentence of outlawry?"

"You know, then, what things they've done to me?"

"But you, what had you done?"

"Listen: if I were to say that I was prudent that day in Milan, I should tell a lie; but I didn't do a single wicked action."

"I believe you; and I believed it before."

"Now, then, I may tell you all."

"Stay," said the friar; and taking another porringer, he went to fill it from the large boiler; he then returned, and offered it, with a spoon, to Renzo; made him sit down on a straw mattress which served him for a bed; went to a cask that stood in one corner, and drew a glass of wine, which he set on a little table near his guest; and then, taking up his own porringer, seated himself beside him.

"Oh, Father Cristoforo!" said Renzo, "is it your business to do all this? But you are always the same. I thank you with all my heart."

"Don't thank me," said the friar; "that belongs to the poor; but you too are a poor man just now. Now, then, tell me what I don't know; tell me about poor Lucia,

and try to do it in a few words, for time is scarce, and there is plenty to be done, as you see."

Renzo began, between one spoonful and another, to relate the history of Lucia, how she had been sheltered in the monastery at Monza, and how she had been forcibly carried off, miraculously liberated, restored to her mother and placed with Donna Prassede.

"Now I will tell you about myself," pursued the narrator; and he briefly sketched the day he spent in Milan, and his flight, and how he had long been absent from home, and now, everything being turned upside down, he had ventured to go thither; how he had not found Agnese there; and how he had learned at Milan that Lucia was at the Lazzeretto. "And here I am," he concluded; "here I am to look for her, to see if she's still living, and if she'll still have me; because, sometimes"—

"But how were you directed here?" asked the friar. "Have you any information whereabouts she was lodged, or at what time she came?"

"None, dear father; none, except that she is here, if, indeed, she be still living, which may God grant!"

"Oh, you poor fellow! But what search have you yet made here?"

"I've wandered and wandered about, but hitherto I've hardly seen anything but men. I thought that the women must be in a separate quarter, but I haven't yet succeeded in finding it; if it is really so, now you can tell me."

"Don't you know, my son, that men are forbidden to enter that quarter, unless they have some business there?"

"Well, and what could happen to me?"

"The regulation is just and good, my dear son; and if the number and weight of sorrows forbid the possibility of its being respected with full rigor, is that a reason why an honest man should transgress it?"

"But, Father Cristoforo," said Renzo, "Lucia ought to be my wife; you know how we've been separated; it's twenty months that I've suffered and borne patiently; I've come as far as here, at the risk of so many things, one worse than the other; and now"—

"I don't know what to say," resumed the friar, replying rather to his own thoughts than to the words of the young man. "You are going with a good intention; and would to God that all who have free access to that place would conduct themselves as I can feel sure you will do! Only remember, that for your behavior in this place we shall both have to render an account, not, probably, to men, but, without fail, at the bar of God. Come this way."

Leading him to the door of the cabin, which faced toward the north, the friar resumed: "Listen to me; Father Felice, the President of the Lazzeretto, will today conduct the few who have recovered to perform their quarantine elsewhere. You see that church there in the middle"—and raising his thin tremulous hand, he pointed out to the left, through the cloudy atmosphere, the cupola of the little temple rising above the miserable tents, and continued: "About there they are now assembled, to go out in procession through the gate by which you must have entered."

"Ah! it was for this, then, that they were trying to clear the passage."

"Just so: and you must also have heard some tollings of the bell."

"I heard one."

"It was the second: when the third rings, they will all be assembled: Father Felice will address a few words to them; and then they will set off. At this signal, do you go thither; contrive to place yourself behind the assembly on the edge of the passage, where, without giving trouble, or being observed, you can watch them

pass; and look whether she is there. If it be not God's will that she should be there, that quarter—" and he again raised his hand, and pointed to the side of the edifice which faced them, "that quarter of the building, and part of the field before it, are assigned to the women. You will see some paling that divides this from that enclosure, but here and there broken and interrupted, so that you'll find no difficulty in gaining admittance. Once in, if you do nothing to give offence, no one probably will say anything to you; if, however, they should make any opposition, say that Father Cristoforo of —— knows you, and will answer for you. Seek her there; seek her with confidence and with resignation. For you must remember that it is a great thing you have come to ask here: a person alive within the Lazzeretto! Do you know how often I have seen my poor people here replaced; how many I have seen carried off! how few go out recovered! Go, prepared to make a sacrifice."

"Ay! I understand!" interrupted Renzo, his eyes rolling wildly, and his face becoming dark and threatening; "I understand! I'll go: I'll look in one place or another, all through the Lazzeretto, and if I don't find her!"—

"If you don't find her?" said the friar, with an air of grave and serious expectation, and an admonishing look.

But Renzo, whose anger had for some time been swelling in his bosom, and now clouded his sight, and deprived him of all feelings of respect, continued: "If I don't find her, I'll succeed in finding somebody else. Either in Milan, or in his detestable palace, or at the end of the world, or in the abode of the devil, I'll find that rascal who separated us; that villain, but for whom Lucia would have been mine twenty months ago; and if we had been doomed to die, we should at least have died together. If that fellow still lives, I'll find him!"

"Renzo!" said the friar, grasping him by one arm, and gazing on him still more severely.

"And if I find him," continued he, blind with rage, "if the plague hasn't already wrought justice—. This is no longer a time when a coward, with his bravoes at his heels, can drive people to desperation, and then mock at them: a time has come when men meet each other face to face! I'll get justice!"

"Miserable wretch!" cried Father Cristoforo, in a voice which had assumed its former full and sonorous tone—"miserable wretch!" He raised his sunken head, and the fire that flashed from his eyes had something terrible in it. "Look about you, miserable man! See who is He that chastises! Who is He that judges, and is not judged! He that scourges, and forgives! But you, a worm of the earth, you would get justice! You! do you know what justice is? Away, unhappy man; away with you! I hoped that, before my death, God would have given me the comfort of hearing that my poor Lucia was alive; perhaps of seeing her, and hearing her promise me that she would send one prayer toward the grave where I shall be laid. Go, you have robbed me of this hope! God has not let her remain upon earth for you; and you, surely, can not have the hardihood to believe yourself worthy that God should think of comforting you. He will have thought of her, for she was one of those souls for whom eternal consolations are reserved. Go! I've no longer time to listen to you."

And so saying, he threw from him Renzo's arm, and moved toward a cabin of sick.

"Ah, Father!" said Renzo, following him with a supplicating air, "will you send me away in this manner?"

"What!" rejoined the Capuchin, relaxing nothing of his severity; "dare you require that I should steal the time from these poor afflicted ones, to listen to your words of fury, your propositions of revenge? I listened to you when you asked consolation and direction; I neglected one duty of charity for the sake of another; but

now you have vengeance in your heart: what do you want with me? Begone! I have beheld those die here who have been offended and have forgiven; offenders who have mourned that they could not humble themselves before the offended: I have wept with both one and the other; but what have I to do with you?"

"Ah! I forgive him! I forgive him, indeed, and for ever!" exclaimed the youth.

"Renzo!" said the friar, with more tranquil sternness; "bethink yourself, and just say how often you have forgiven him."

"Yes, yes," said Renzo, with deep shame and emotion; "I see now that I have never before really forgiven him; I see that I have spoken like a beast, and not like a Christian: and now, by the grace of God, I will forgive him; yes, I'll forgive him from my very heart."

"And supposing you were to see him?"

"I would pray the Lord to give me patience, and to touch his heart."

"Would you remember that the Lord has not only commanded us to forgive our enemies, but also to love them? Would you remember that He so loved him as to lay down His life for him?"

"Yes, by His help, I would."

"Well, then, come and see him. You have said, 'I'll find him;' and you shall find him. Come, and you shall see against whom you would nourish hatred; to whom you would wish evil, and be ready to do it; of what life you would render yourself master!"

And taking Renzo's hand, which he grasped as a healthy young man would have done, he moved forward. Renzo followed, without daring to ask anything further.

After a short walk, the friar stopped near the entrance of a cabin, fixed his eyes on Renzo's face with a mixture of gravity and tenderness, and drew him in.

The first thing he observed on entering, was a sick

person, seated on some straw, in the background, who did not, however, seem very ill, but rather recovering from illness. On seeing the Father, he shook his head, as if to say *No:* the Father bent his with an air of sorrow and resignation. Renzo, meanwhile, eyeing the surrounding objects with uneasy curiosity, beheld some one lying upon a bed, and wrapped in a sheet, with a nobleman's cloak laid upon him as a quilt. He recognized Don Rodrigo, and involuntarily shrank back; but the friar drew him to the foot of the bed, and stretching over it his other hand, pointed to the man who there lay prostrate. The unhappy being was perfectly motionless; his eyes were open, but he saw nothing; his face was pale and covered with black spots; his lips black and swollen; it would have been called the face of a corpse, had not convulsive twitchings revealed a tenacity of life. His bosom heaved from time to time with painfully short respiration; and his right hand, laid outside the cloak, pressed it closely to his heart with a firm grasp of his clenched fingers, which were of a livid color, and black at the extremities.

"You see," said the friar, in a low and solemn voice. "This may be a punishment, or it may be mercy. The disposition you now have toward this man, who certainly has offended you, that disposition will God, whom assuredly you have offended, have toward you at the great day. Bless him, and be blessed. For four days has he lain there, as you see him, without giving any signs of consciousness. Perhaps the Lord is ready to grant him an hour of repentance, but waits for you to ask it: perhaps it is His will that you should pray for it with your innocent Lucia; perhaps he reserves the mercy for your solitary prayer, the prayer of an afflicted and resigned heart. Perhaps the salvation of this man and your own depend at this moment upon yourself, upon the disposition of your mind to forgiveness, to

compassion, to love!" He ceased; and joining his hands, bent his head over them both, as if in prayer. Renzo did the same.

"Go now," resumed the friar, "go prepared to make a sacrifice, and to bless God, whatever be the issue of your researches. And, whatever it be, come and give me an account of it: we will praise Him together."

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE MEETING

WHO could have foreseen a few hours before that, in the very crisis of Renzo's search, at the approach of the moment of greatest suspense which was so soon to be decisive, his heart would have been divided between Lucia and Don Rodrigo?

The small octagonal temple, which stood elevated from the ground by several steps, in the middle of the Lazzeretto, was, in its original construction, open on every side, without other support than pilasters and columns—a perforated building, so to say.

Renzo had hardly turned toward the temple, when Father Felice made his appearance in the portico and advanced toward the arch in the middle of the side which faces the city, in front of which the assembly were arranged at the foot of the steps, and along the course prepared for them; and shortly Renzo perceived by his manner that he had begun the sermon. He therefore went round by some little by-paths, so as to attain the rear of the audience, as had been suggested to him. Arrived there, he stood still very quietly, and ran over the whole with his eye; but he could see nothing from his position, except a mass of heads. He was touched and affected by the venerable figure of the speaker; and, with

all the attention he could command in such a moment of expectation,, listened to a large portion of his solemn address.

Then a deep murmur of groans and sobs, which had been increasing in the assembly, was suddenly suspended, on seeing the preacher put a rope round his neck, and fall upon his knees; and, in profound silence, they stood awaiting what he was about to say.

"For me," continued he, "and the rest of my companions who, without any merit of our own, have been chosen out for the high privilege of serving Christ in you, I humbly implore your forgiveness, if we have not worthily fulfilled so great a ministry. If slothfulness, if the ungovernableness of the flesh, has rendered us less attentive to your necessities, less ready to answer your calls; if unjust impatience, or blameworthy weariness, has sometimes made us show you a severe and dispirited countenance; if the miserable thought that we were necessary to you, has sometimes induced us to fail in treating you with that humility which became us; if our frailty has led us hastily to commit any action which has been a cause of offence to you; forgive us! And so may God forgive you all your trespasses, and bless you." Then, making the sign of a large cross over the assembly, he rose.

The admirable friar then took a large cross which stood resting against a pillar, elevated it before him, left his sandals at the edge of the outside portico, and, through the midst of the crowd, which reverently made way for him, proceeded to place himself at their head.

Renzo, no less affected than if he had been one of those from whom this singular forgiveness was requested, withdrew a little further, and succeeded in placing himself by the side of a cabin. Here he stood waiting, with his body half concealed and his head stretched forward, his eyes wide open, and his heart beating violently, but

at the same time with a kind of new and particular confidence, arising, I think, from the tenderness of spirit which the sermon and the spectacle of the general emotion had excited in him.

Father Felice now came up, barefoot, with the rope round his neck, and that tall and heavy cross elevated before him; his face was pale and haggard, inspiring both sorrow and encouragement; he walked with slow but resolute steps, like one who would spare the weakness of others; and in everything was like a man to whom these supernumerary labors and troubles imparted strength to sustain those which were necessary, and inseparable from his charge. Immediately behind him came the taller children, barefooted for the most part, very few entirely clothed, and some actually in their shirts. Then came the women, almost every one leading a little child by the hand, and alternately chanting the Miserere; while the feebleness of their voices, and the paleness and languor of their countenances, were enough to fill the heart of any one with pity who chanced to be there as a mere spectator. But Renzo was gazing and examining from rank to rank, from face to face, without passing over one; for which the extremely slow advance of the procession gave him abundant leisure. On and on it goes; he looks and looks, always to no purpose; he keeps glancing rapidly over the crowd which still remains behind, and which is gradually diminishing: now there are very few rows;—we are at the last;—all are gone by;—all were unknown faces.

Thus was the soothing hope completely dissipated; and, as it was dissipated, it not only carried away the comfort it had brought along with it, but, as is generally the case, left him in a worse condition than before. Now the happiest alternative was to find Lucia ill. On reaching the foot of the little temple, he went and knelt down upon the lowest step, and there poured forth a prayer.

He rose somewhat more reanimated; went round the temple, came into the other road which he had not before seen, and which led to the opposite gate, and after going on a little way, saw on both sides the paling the friar had told him of, but full of breaks and gaps, exactly as he had said. He entered through one of these, and found himself in the quarter assigned to the women. Almost at the first step he took, he saw lying on the ground a little bell, such as the monatti wore upon their feet, quite perfect, with all its straps and buckles; and it immediately struck him that perhaps such an instrument might serve him as a passport in that place. He therefore picked it up, and, looking round to see if any one were watching him, buckled it on. He then set himself to that search, which, were it only for the multiplicity of the objects, would have been extremely wearisome, even had those objects been anything but what they were. He had now gone I know not how far, without success and without accidents, when he heard behind him a "Hey!"—a call which seemed to be addressed to him. He turned round, and saw at a little distance a commissary, who, with uplifted hand, was beckoning to none other but him, and crying, "There, in those rooms, you're wanted: here we've only just finished clearing away."

Renzo immediately perceived whom he was taken for, and that the little bell was the cause of the mistake; he called himself a great fool for having thought only of the inconveniences which this token might enable him to avoid, and not of those which it might draw down upon him; and at the same instant devised a plan to free himself from the difficulty. He repeatedly nodded to him in a hurried manner, as if to say that he understood and would obey; and then got out of his sight by slipping aside between the cabins.

When he thought himself far enough off, he began to think about dismissing this cause of offence; and to per-

form the operation without being observed, he stationed himself in the narrow passage between two little huts, which had their backs turned to each other. Stooping down to unloose the buckles, and in this position resting his head against the straw wall of one of the cabins, a voice reached his ear from it. Oh, Heavens! is it possible? His whole soul was in that ear; he held his breath. Yes, indeed! it is that voice! "Fear of what?" said that gentle voice; "we have passed through much worse than a storm. He who has preserved us hitherto, will preserve us even now."

If Renzo uttered no cry, it was not for fear of being discovered, but because he had no breath to utter it. His knees failed beneath him, his sight became dim; but it was only for the first moment; at the second he was on his feet, more alert, more vigorous than ever; in three bounds he was round the cabin, stood at the doorway, saw her who had been speaking, saw her standing by a bedside, and bending over it. She turned on hearing a noise; looked, fancied she mistook the object, looked again more fixedly, and exclaimed: "Oh, blessed Lord!"

"Lucia! I've found you! I've found you! It's really you! You're living!" exclaimed Renzo, advancing toward her, all in a tremble.

"Oh, blessed Lord!" replied Lucia, trembling far more violently. "You? What is this? The plague!"

"I've had it. And you?"

"Ah! and I too. And about my mother?"

"I haven't seen her, for she's at Pasturo; I believe, however, she's very well. But how pale you still are! how weak you seem! You're recovered, however, aren't you?"

"The Lord has been pleased to give me a little longer below. Ah, Renzo! why are you here?"

"Why?" said Renzo, drawing all the time nearer to her; "do you ask why? Why I should come here! Need

I say why? Who is there I ought to think about? Am I no longer Renzo? Are you no longer Lucia?"

"Ah, what are you saying! What are you saying! Didn't my mother write to you?"

"Ay: that indeed she did! Fine things to write to an unfortunate, afflicted, fugitive wretch—to a young fellow who has never offered you a single affront, at least!"

"But Renzo! Renzo! since you knew, why come? why?"

"Why come? Oh, Lucia! Why come, do you say? After so many promises! Are we no longer ourselves? Don't you any longer remember? What is wanting?"

"O Lord," exclaimed Lucia, piteously, clasping her hands, and raising her eyes to heaven, "why hast Thou not granted me the mercy of taking me to Thyself? Oh, Renzo, whatever have you done? See; I was beginning to hope that in time you would have forgotten me"—

"A fine hope, indeed! Fine things to tell me to my face!"

"Ah, what have you done? and in this place! among all this misery! among these sights! here, where they do nothing but die, you have'—

"We must pray God for those who die, and hope that they will go to a good place; but it isn't surely fair, even for this reason, that they who live should live in despair."

"But Renzo! you don't think what you're saying. A promise to the Madonna!—a vow!"

"And I tell you they are promises that go for nothing."

"O Lord! What do you say? where have you been all this time? whom have you mixed with? how are you talking?"

"I'm talking like a good Christian; and I think better of the Madonna than you do; for I believe she doesn't wish for promises that injure one's fellow-creatures. If the Madonna had spoken, then, indeed! But what has happened? a mere fancy of your own. Don't you know

what you ought to promise the Madonna? promise her that the first daughter we have, we'll call her Maria; for that I'm willing to promise too: there are things that do much more honor to the Madonna; there are devotions that have some use in them, and do no harm to any one."

"No, no; don't say so: you don't know what you are saying; you don't know what it is to make a vow; you've never been in such circumstances."

And she impetuously returned toward the bed.

"Lucia!" said he, without stirring, "just tell me this one thing: if there was not this reason, would you be the same to me as ever?"

"Heartless man!" replied Lucia, turning round, and with difficulty restraining her tears "when you've made me say what's quite useless, what would do me harm, and what, perhaps, would be sinful, will you be content then? Go away! Ah, go! try to let my mother know that I'm recovered; that here, too, God has always helped me: and that I've found a kind creature, this good lady, who's like a mother to me; tell her I hope she will be preserved from this disease, and that we shall see each other again, when and how God pleases. Go away, for Heaven's sake, and think no more about me except when you say your prayers."

And, like one who has nothing more to say, and wishes to hear nothing further—like one who would withdraw herself from danger, she again retreated closer to the bed where lay the lady she had mentioned.

"Listen, Lucia, listen," said Renzo, without, however, attempting to go any nearer.

"No, no; go away, for charity's sake!"

"Listen: Father Cristoforo"—

"What?"

"He's here."

"Here! Where? How do you know?"

"I've spoken to him a little while ago; I've been with

him for a short time: and a religious man like him, it seems to me"—

"He's here! to assist the poor sick, I dare say. But he? has he had the plague?"

"Ah, Lucia! I'm afraid, I'm sadly afraid"— And while Renzo was thus hesitating to pronounce the words which were so distressing to himself, and he felt must be equally so to Lucia, she had again left the bedside, and was once more drawing near him, "I'm afraid he has it now!"

"Oh, the poor holy man! How is he? is he in bed? is he attended?"

"He's up, going about, and attending upon others; but if you could see his looks, and how he totters! One sees so many, that it's too easy to be sure there's no mistake!"

"Oh, and he's here indeed."

"Yes, and only a little way off; very little further than from your house to mine—if you remember!"—

"Oh, most Holy Virgin!"

"Well, very little further. You may think whether we didn't talk about you. I want to tell you what he said to me with his own lips. He told me I did right to come and look for you, and that the Lord approves of a youth's acting so, and would help me to find you; which has really been the truth: but surely he's a saint. So, you see!"

"But if he said so, it was because he didn't know"—

"What would you have him know about things you've done out of your own head, without rule, and without the advice of any one? A good man, a man of judgment, as he is, would never think of things of this kind. But oh, what he showed me!"— And here he related his visit to the cabin; while Lucia, however her senses and her mind must have been accustomed, in that abode, to the strongest impressions, was completely overwhelmed with horror and compassion.

"And there, too," pursued Renzo, "he spoke like a saint; he said that perhaps the Lord has designed to show mercy to that poor fellow, and waits to take him at the right moment; but wishes that we should pray for him together. Together! did you hear?"

"Yes, yes; we will pray for him, each of us where the Lord shall place us; He will know how to unite our prayers."

"But if I tell you his very words!"

"But, Renzo, he doesn't know"—

"But don't you see that when it is a saint who speaks, it is the Lord that makes him speak? and that he wouldn't have spoken thus, if it shouldn't really be so. And this poor fellow's soul! I have indeed prayed, and will still pray, for him; I've prayed from my heart, just as if it had been for a brother of mine. But how do you wish the poor creature to be, in the other world, if this matter be not settled here below, if the evils he has done be not undone? For, if you'll return to reason, then all will be as at first; what has been, has been; he has had his punishment here."

"No, Renzo, no; God would not have us do evil that He may show mercy; leave Him to do this; and for us, our duty is to pray for him. If I had died that night, could not God, then, have forgiven him? And if I've not died, if I've been delivered"—

"And your mother, that poor Agnese, who has always wished me well, and who strove so to see us husband and wife, has she never told you that it was a perverted idea of yours? She, who has made you listen to reason, too, at other times; for, on certain subjects, she thinks more wisely than you."

"My mother! do you think my mother would advise me to break a vow! But, Renzo! you're not in your proper senses."

"Oh, will you have me say so? You women cannot

understand these things. Father Cristoforo told me to go back and tell him whether I had found you. I'm going: we'll hear what he says; whatever he thinks"—

"Yes, yes; go to that holy man; tell him that I pray for him, and ask him to do so for me, for I need it so much, so very much! But for Heaven's sake, for your own soul's sake, and mine, never come back here, to do me harm, to—tempt me. Father Cristoforo will know how to explain things to you, and bring you to your proper senses; he will make you set your heart at rest."

"My heart at rest! Oh, you may drive this idea out of your head. You've already had those abominable words written to me; and I know what I've suffered from them; and now you've the heart to say so to me. I tell you plainly and flatly that I'll never set my heart at rest. You want to forget me; but I don't want to forget you. And I assure you—do you hear?—that if you make me lose my senses, I shall never get them again. Away with my business, away with good rules. Will you condemn me to be a madman all my life? and like a madman I shall be. And that poor fellow! The Lord knows whether I've not forgiven him from my heart; but you—Will you make me think, for the rest of my life, that if he had not—Lucia, you have bid me forget you: forget you! How can I? Whom do you think I have thought about all this time? And after so many things! after so many promises! What have I done to you since we parted? Do you treat me in this way because I've suffered? because I've had misfortunes? because the world has persecuted me? because I've spent so long a time from home, unhappy, and far from you? because the first moment I could, I came to look for you?"

When Lucia could sufficiently command herself to speak, she exclaimed again, joining her hands, and raising her eyes to heaven, bathed in tears: "O most Holy Virgin, do thou help me! Thou knowest that, since that

night, I have never passed such a moment as this. Thou didst succor me then; O succor me also now!"

"Yes, Lucia, you do right to invoke the Madonna; but why will you believe that she, who is so kind, the mother of mercy, can have pleasure in making us suffer—me, at any rate—for a word that escaped you at a moment when you knew not what you were saying? Will you believe that she helped you then, to bring us into trouble afterward? If, after all, this is only an excuse;—if the truth is, that I have become hateful to you, tell me so—speak plainly."

"For pity's sake, Renzo, for pity's sake, for the sake of your poor dead, have done, have done, don't kill me quite! Go to Father Cristoforo, commend me to him; and don't come back here."

"I go; but you may fancy whether I shall return or not! I'd come back if I was at the end of the world; that I would." And he disappeared.

Lucia went and sat down, or rather suffered herself to sink upon the ground, by the side of the bed; and resting her head against it, continued to weep bitterly. The lady, who until now had been attentively watching and listening, but had not spoken a word, asked what was the meaning of this apparition, this meeting, these tears.

Renzo, meanwhile, trudged off in great haste toward the quarters of the good friar. With a little care, and not without some steps thrown away, he at length succeeded in reaching them. He found the cabin: its occupant, however, was not there; but, rambling and peeping about in its vicinity, he discovered him in a tent, stooping toward the ground, or, indeed, almost lying upon his face, administering consolation to a dying person. He drew back, and waited in silence. In a few moments he saw him close the poor creature's eyes, raise himself

upon his knees, and after a short prayer, get up. He then went forward, and advanced to meet him.

"Oh!" said the friar, on seeing him approach. "Well?"

"She's there: I've found her!"

"In what state?"

"Recovered, or at least out of her bed."

"The Lord be praised!"

"But," said Renzo, when he came near enough to be able to speak in an undertone, "there's another difficulty."

"What do you mean?"

"You know already what a good creature this young girl is; but she's sometimes rather positive in her opinions. After so many promises, after all you know of, now she actually tells me she can't marry me, because she says—how can I express it?—in that night of terror, her brain became heated—that is to say, she made a vow to the Madonna. Things without any foundation, aren't they? Good enough for those who have knowledge, and grounds for doing them; but for us common people, that don't well know what we ought to do—aren't they things that won't hold good?"

"Is she very far from here?"

"Oh, no: a few yards beyond the church."

"Wait here for me a moment," said the friar; "and then we'll go together."

"Do you mean that you'll give her to understand"—

"I know nothing about it, my son; I must first hear what she has to say to me."

"I understand," said Renzo; and he was left, with his eyes fixed on the ground, and his arms crossed on his breast, to ruminate in still-unallayed suspense. The friar again went in search of Father Vittore, begged him once more to supply his place, went into his cabin, came forth with a basket on his arm, and returning to his expectant companion, said, "Let us go." He then went forward,

leading the way to that same cabin which, a little while before, they had entered together. This time he left Renzo outside; he himself entered, and reappeared in a moment or two, saying: "Nothing! We must pray; we must pray. Now," added he, "you must be my guide."

When they came in sight of the little cabin, Renzo stopped, turned round, and said with a trembling voice, "There she is."

They entered. "See: they're there!" exclaimed the lady from her bed. Lucia turned, sprang up precipitately, and advanced to meet the aged man, crying: "Oh, whom do I see? Oh, Father Cristoforo!"

"Well, Lucia! from how many troubles has the Lord delivered you! You must indeed rejoice that you have always trusted in Him."

"Oh yes, indeed! But you, Father? How you are altered! How are you? tell me, how are you?"

"As God wills, and as, by His grace, I will also," replied the friar, with a placid look. And drawing her on one side, he added: "Listen: I can only stay here a few moments. Are you inclined to confide in me, as you have done hitherto?"

"Oh! are you not always my Father?"

"Then, my daughter, what is this vow that Renzo has been telling me about?"

"It's a vow that I made to the Madonna not to marry."

"But did you recollect at the time, that you were already bound by another promise?"

"When it related to the Lord and the Madonna—No; I didn't think about it."

"My daughter, the Lord approves of sacrifices and offerings when we make them of our own. It is the heart that He desires—the will; but you could not offer him the will of another, to whom you had already pledged yourself."

"Have I done wrong?"

"No, my poor child, don't think so: I believe, rather, that the Holy Virgin will have accepted the intention of your afflicted heart, and have presented it to God for you. But tell me: have you never consulted with any one on this subject?"

"I didn't think it was a sin I ought to confess; and what little good one does, one has no need to tell."

"Have you no other motive that hinders you from fulfilling the promise you have made to Renzo?"

"As to this—for me—what motive?—I cannot say—nothing else," replied Lucia, with a hesitation so expressed that it announced anything but uncertainty of thought; and her cheeks, still pale from illness, suddenly glowed with the deepest crimson.

"Do you believe," resumed the old man, lowering his eyes, "that God has given to His Church authority to remit and retain, according as it proves best, the debts and obligations that men may have contracted to Him?"

"Yes, indeed I do."

"Know, then, that we who are charged with the care of the souls in this place, have, for all those who apply to us, the most ample powers of the Church; and consequently, that I can, when you request it, free you from the obligation, whatever it may be, that you may have contracted by this your vow."

"But is it not a sin to turn back, and to repent of a promise made to the Madonna? I made it at the time with my whole heart," said Lucia, violently agitated by the assault of so unexpected a hope, and by the uprising, on the other hand, of a terror, fortified by all the thoughts which had so long been the principal occupation of her mind.

"A sin, my daughter?" said the Father, "a sin to have recourse to the Church, and to ask her minister to make use of the authority which he has received from her, and she has received from God? I have seen how you two

have been led to unite yourselves; and, assuredly, if ever it would seem that two were joined together by God, you were—you are those two; nor do I now see that God may wish you to be put asunder. And I bless Him that He has given me, unworthy as I am, the power of speaking in His name, and returning to you your plighted word. And if you request me to declare you absolved from this vow, I shall not hesitate to do it; nay, I wish you may request me."

"Then—then—I do request you!" said Lucia, with a countenance no longer agitated, except by modesty.

The friar beckoned to the youth, who was standing in the furthest corner, intently watching the dialogue in which he was so much interested; and, on his drawing near, pronounced, in an explicit voice, to Lucia, "By the authority I have received from the Church, I declare you absolved from the vow of virginity, annulling what may have been unadvised in it, and freeing you from every obligation you may thereby have contracted."

Let the reader imagine how these words sounded in Renzo's ears. His eyes eagerly thanked him who had uttered them, and instantly sought those of Lucia; but in vain.

"Return in security and peace to your former desires," pursued the Capuchin, addressing Lucia; "beseech the Lord again for those graces you once besought to make you a holy wife; and rely upon it, that He will bestow them upon you more abundantly, after so many sorrows. And you," said he, turning to Renzo, "remember, my son, that if the Church restores to you this companion, she does it not to procure for you a temporal and earthly pleasure, which, even could it be complete, and free from all intermixture of sorrow, must end in one great affliction at the moment of leaving you; but she does it to lead you both forward in that way of pleasantness which shall have no end. Love each other as companions in a

journey, with the thought that you will have to part from one another, and with the hope of being reunited for ever. If God grants you children, make it your object to bring them up for Him, to inspire them with love to Him, and to all men; and then you will train them rightly in everything else. Lucia! has he told you," and he pointed to Renzo, "whom he has seen here?"

"Oh, yes, Father, he has!"

"You will pray for him! Don't be weary of doing so. And you will pray also for me! My children! I wish you to have a remembrance of the poor friar." And he drew out of his basket a little box of some common kind of wood, but turned and polished with a certain Capuchin precision, and continued: "Within this is the remainder of that loaf—the first I asked for charity; that loaf, of which you must have heard speak! I leave it to you: take care of it; show it to your children! They will be born into a wretched world, into a miserable age, in the midst of proud and exasperating men: tell them always to forgive, always!—everything, everything! and to pray for the poor friar!"

So saying, he handed the box to Lucia, who received it with reverence, as if it had been a sacred relic. Then, with a calmer voice, he added: "Now, then, tell me; what have you to depend upon here in Milan? Where do you propose to lodge on leaving this? And who will conduct you to your mother, whom may God have preserved in health?"

"This good lady is like a mother to me: we shall leave this place together, and then she will provide for every thing."

"God bless you!" said the friar, approaching the bed.

"I, too, thank you," said the widow, "for the comfort you have given these poor creatures; though I had counted upon keeping this dear Lucia always with me. But I will keep her in the mean while; I will accompany

here to her own country, and deliver her to her mother; and," added she, in a lower tone, "I should like to provide her wardrobe. I have too much wealth, and have not one left out of those who should have shared it."

"You may thus," said the friar, "make an acceptable offering to the Lord, and at the same time benefit your neighbor. I do not recommend this young girl to you, for I see already how she has become your daughter: it only remains to bless God, who knows how to show Himself a father even in chastisement, and who, by bringing you together, has given so plain a proof of His love to both of you. But come!" resumed he, turning to Renzo, and taking him by the hand, "we two have nothing more to do here: we have already been here too long. Let us go."

"Oh, Father!" said Lucia, "shall I see you again? I who am of no use in this world, have recovered; and you"—

"It is now a long time ago," replied the old man, in a mild and serious tone, "since I besought of the Lord a very great mercy, that I might end my days in the service of my fellow-creatures. If He now vouchsafes to grant it me, I would wish all those who have any love for me, to assist me in praising Him. Come, give Renzo your messages to your mother."

"Tell her what you have seen," said Lucia to her betrothed; "that I have found another mother here, that we will come to her together as quickly as possible, and that I hope, earnestly hope, to find her well."

"If you want money," said Renzo, "I have about me all that you sent, and"—

"No, no," interrupted the widow; "I have only too much."

"Let us go," suggested the friar.

"Good-by, till we meet again, Lucia!—and to you too, kind lady," said Renzo.

"Who knows whether the Lord, in His mercy, will allow us all to meet again!" exclaimed Lucia.

"May He be with you always, and bless you," said Friar Cristoforo to the two companions; and, accompanied by Renzo, he quitted the cabin.

When they regained the road, the friar pressed his hand, and said: "If (as may God grant!) you find that poor Agnese, salute her in my name; and beg her, and all those who are left, and remember Father Cristoforo, to pray for him. God go with you, and bless you for ever!"

"Oh, dear Father! we shall meet again?—we shall meet again?"

"Above, I hope." And with these words he parted from Renzo, who, staying to watch him till he beheld him disappear, set off hastily toward the gate, casting his farewell looks of compassion on each side over the melancholy scene.

CHAPTER XXXVII

FAMILIAR SCENES

HARDLY had Renzo crossed the threshold of the Lazzeretto, and taken the way to the right, to find the narrow road by which, in the morning, he had come out under the walls, when a few large and scattered drops began to fall, which lighting upon, and rebounding from, the white and parched road, stirred up a cloud of very fine dust; these soon multiplied into rain; and before he reached the by-path, it poured down in torrents. Far from feeling any disquietude, Renzo luxuriated in it, and enjoyed himself in that refreshing coolness, that murmur, that general motion of the grass and leaves, shaking, dripping, revived, and glistening, as they were.

But, how far fuller and more unalloyed would have been this feeling, could he have divined what actually was beheld a few days afterward, that that rain carried off—washed away, so to say—the contagion; that, from that day forward, the Lazzeretto, if it was not about to restore to the living all the living whom it contained, would engulf, at least, no others; that, within one week, doors and shops would be seen reopened; quarantine would scarcely be spoken of any longer; and of the pestilence only a solitary token or two remain here and there; that trace which every pestilence had left behind it for some time.

When he passed through Monza, the night had completely closed in: he managed, however, to leave the town in the direction that led to the right road. Toward dawn he found himself on the banks of the Adda.

It had never ceased raining a moment; but at a certain stage it had changed from a perfect deluge to more moderate rain, and then into a fine, silent, uniform drizzle: the lofty and rarefied clouds formed a continual, but light and transparent, veil; and the twilight dawn allowed Renzo to distinguish the surrounding country. Within this tract was his own village.

He is at Pescate; he pursues his course along the remaining part of the road that runs by the side of the Adda, giving a melancholy glance, however, at Pescarenico; he crosses the bridge; and, through fields and lanes, shortly arrives at his friend's hospitable dwelling. He, who, only just risen, was standing in the doorway to watch the weather, raised his eyes in amazement at that strange figure, so drenched, bespattered, and, we may say, dirty, yet at the same time, so lively and at ease: in his whole life he had never seen a man worse equipped, and more thoroughly contented.

"Aha!" said he; "here already? and in such weather! How have things gone?"

"She's there," said Renzo; "she's there, she's there!"

"Well?"

"Recovered, which is better. I have to thank the Lord and the Madonna for it as long as I live. But oh! such grand things, such wonderful things! I'll tell you all afterwards."

"But what a plight you are in!"

"I'm a beauty, am I not?"

"To say the truth, you might employ the overplus above to wash off the overplus below. But wait a minute, and I'll make you a good fire."

"I won't refuse it, I assure you. Where do you think it caught me? just at the gate of the Lazzeretto. But never mind! let the weather do its own business, and I mine."

His friend then went out, and soon returned with two bundles of fagots: one he laid on the ground, the other on the hearth, and with a few embers remaining over from the evening, quickly kindled a fine blaze.

"That little bundle that I left upstairs, just fetch it for me, for before these clothes that I have on dry."

Returning with the bundle, his friend said: "I should think you must have a pretty good appetite: I fancy you haven't wanted enough to drink by the way; but something to eat. I'm going to milk: when I come back the water will be ready, and we'll make a good polenta. You, meanwhile, can dress yourself at your leisure."

When left alone, Renzo, not without some difficulty, took off the rest of his clothes, which were almost as if glued to his skin; he then dried himself and dressed himself anew from head to foot. His friend returned, and set himself to make the polenta, Renzo, meanwhile, sitting by in expectation.

Renzo could not resist taking a little run up to Agnese's cottage, to see once more a certain window, and there, too, to rub his hands with glee. He went and re-

turned unobserved, and retired to rest in good time. In good time, too, he rose next morning; and finding that the rain had ceased, if settled fine weather had not yet returned, he set off quickly on his way to Pasturo.

It was still early when he arrived there; for he was no less willing and in a hurry to bring matters to an end, than the reader probably is. He inquired for Agnese, and heard that she was safe and well; a small cottage standing by itself was pointed out to him as the place where she was staying. He went thither, and called her by name from the street. On hearing such a call, she rushed to the window; and while she stood, with open mouth, on the point of uttering I know not what sound of exclamation, Renzo prevented her by saying, "Lucia's recovered: I saw her the day before yesterday: she sends you her love, and will be here soon. And besides these, I've so many, many things to tell you!"

"I'll come and open the door for you."

"Wait: the plague!" said Renzo; you've not had it, I believe?"

"No, not I: have you?"

"Yes, I have; you must therefore be prudent. I come from Milan; and you shall hear that I've been up to the eyes in the midst of the contagion."

"But"— began Agnese.

"Eh!" interrupted Renzo, there's no *but* that will hold. I know what you mean; but you shall hear, you shall hear that there are no longer any buts in the way. Let us go into some open space, where we can talk at our ease, without danger, and you shall hear."

Agnese pointed out to him a garden behind the house; if he would go in, and seat himself on one of the two benches which he would find opposite each other, she would come down directly, and go and sit on the other. The conclusion of their talk was that they would go to keep house all together, in the territory of Bergamo, and

in the mean time Renzo would often take another trip to Pasturo, to see his mother, and to keep her acquainted with whatever might happen.

Renzo took his departure, with the additional consolation of having found one so dear to him safe and well. He remained the rest of that day, and for the night, at his friend's house, and on the morrow was again on his way, but in another direction, toward his adopted country.

Here he found Bortolo, still in good health, and in less apprehension of losing it; for in those few days, things had there also rapidly taken a favorable turn.

In the course of a few days he returned to his native village, which he found still more signally changed for the better. He went over immediately to Pasturo: there he found Agnese in good spirits again, and ready to return home as soon as might be, so that he accompanied her thither at once. Agnese found everything as she had left it; so that she was forced to declare, that, considering it was a poor widow and her daughter, the angels had kept guard over it.

Agnese's first care was to prepare for this kind soul the most comfortable accommodations her poor little cottage could afford; then she went to procure some silk to wind, and thus, employed with her reel, beguiled the wearisome hours of delay.

We will make the reader, however, pass over all this period in one moment, by briefly stating that, a few days after Renzo's visit to the Lazzaretto, Lucia left it with the kind widow; that, a general quarantine having been enjoined, they kept it together in the house of the latter, that part of the time was spent in preparing Lucia's wardrobe, at which, after sundry ceremonious objections, she was obliged to work herself; and that the quarantine having expired, the widow left her warehouse and dwelling under the custody of her brother, the commissioner, and prepared to set off on her journey with Lucia. We

could, too, speedily add—they set off, arrived, and all the rest; but, with all our willingness to accommodate ourselves to this haste of the reader's, there are three things appertaining to this period of time, which we are not willing to pass over in silence; and with two, at least, we believe the reader himself will say that we should have been to blame in so doing.

The first is, that when Lucia returned to relate her adventures to the good widow more in particular, and with greater order that she could do in her agitation of mind when she first confided them to her, and when she more expressly mentioned the Signora who had given her shelter in the monastery at Monza, she learned from her friend things which, by giving her the key of many mysteries, filled her mind with melancholy and fearful astonishment. She learned from the widow that the unhappy Gertrude, having fallen under suspicion of most atrocious conduct, had been conveyed, by order of the Cardinal, to a monastery at Milan; that there, after long indulgence in rage and struggles, she had repented, and confessed her faults, and that her present life was one of such voluntary inflictions, that no one, except by depriving her of that life entirely, could have invented a severer punishment for her.

The other fact is, that Lucia, after making inquiries about Father Cristoforo of all the Capuchins she could meet with in the Lazzeretto, heard there, with more sorrow than surprise, that he had died of the pestilence.

Lastly, before leaving Milan, she wished also to ascertain something about her former patrons, and to perform, as she said, an act of duty, if any yet remained. The widow accompanied her to the house, where they learned that both one and the other had been carried off with the multitude.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

AFTER THE STORM

ONE fine evening Agnese heard a carriage stop at the door.—It is she, and none other!—It was indeed Lucia, with the good widow: the mutual greetings we leave the reader to imagine.

Next morning Renzo arrived in good time, totally ignorant of what had happened, and with no other intentions than of pouring out his feelings a little with Agnese about Lucia's long delay.

"Our poor Father Cristoforo!" said Lucia; "pray for his soul: though one may be almost sure that he is now praying for us above."

"I expected no less, indeed," said Renzo. Nor was this the only melancholy chord touched in the course of this dialogue. But what then? Whatever subject was the topic of conversation, it always seemed to them delightful.

At length Renzo said that he was going to Don Abbondio, to make arrangements about the wedding.

He went, and with a certain air of respectful raillery, "Signor Curato," said he, "have you at last lost that headache, which you told me prevented your marrying us? We are now in time; the bride is here, and I've come to know when it will be convenient to you: but this time, I must request you to make haste."

Don Abbondio did not, indeed, reply that he would not; but he began to hesitate, to bring forward sundry excuses, to throw out sundry insinuations: and why bring himself into notice and publish his name, with that proclamation for his seizure still out against him? and that the thing could be done equally well elsewhere; and this, that, and the other argument.

"Oh, I see!" said Renzo; "you've still a little pain in your head. But listen, listen." And he began to describe in what state he had beheld poor Don Rodrigo; and that by that time he must undoubtedly be gone. "Let us hope," concluded he, "that the Lord will have had mercy on him."

"This has nothing to do with us," said Don Abbondio. "Did I say no? Certainly I did not; but I speak for good reasons. Besides, don't you see, as long as a man has breath in his body—Only look at me: I'm somewhat sickly; I too have been nearer the other world than this: and yet I'm here; and, if troubles don't come upon me, I may hope to stay here a little longer. Think, too, of some people's constitutions. But, as I say, this has nothing to do with us."

After a little further conversation neither more nor less conclusive, Renzo made an elegant bow, returned to his party, made his report of the interview, and concluded by saying: "I've come away, because I've had quite enough of it, and that I mightn't run the risk of losing my patience, and using bad words. Sometimes he seemed exactly like what he was that other time; the very same hesitation, and the very same arguments: I'm sure if it had lasted a little longer, he'd have returned to the charge with some words in Latin. I see there must be another delay: it would be better to do what he says at once, and go and get married where we're about to live."

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said the widow. "I should like you to let us women go make the trial, and see whether we can't find rather a better way to manage him. By this means, too, I shall have the pleasure of knowing this man, whether he's just such as you describe him. After dinner I should like to go, not to assail him again too quickly. And now, Signor bridegroom, please to accompany us two in a little walk, while Ag-

nese is so busily employed: I will act the part of Lucia's mother. I want very much to see these mountains, and this lake of which I've heard so much, rather more at large, for the little I've already seen of them seems to me a charmingly fine view."

Renzo escorted them first to the cottage of his hospitable friend, where they met with a hearty welcome; and they made him promise that, not that day only, but, if he could, every day, he would join their party at dinner.

Having returned from their ramble, and dined, Renzo suddenly took his departure, without saying where he was going. The women waited a little while to confer together, and concert about the mode of assailing Don Abbondio; and at length they set off to make the attack.

—Here they are, I declare!—said he to himself; but he put on a pleasant face, and offered warm congratulations to Lucia, greetings to Agnese, and compliments to the stranger. He made them sit down; then he entered upon the grand subject of the plague, and wanted to hear from Lucia how she had managed to get over it in the midst of so many sorrows: the Lazzeretto afforded an opportunity of bringing her companion into conversation; then, as was but fair, Don Abbondio talked about his share in the storm; then followed great rejoicings with Agnese, that she had come forth unharmed. The conversation was carried to some length: from the very first moment the two elders were on the watch for a favorable opportunity of mentioning the essential point; and at length one of the two, I am not sure which, succeeded in breaking the ice. But what think you? Don Abbondio could not hear with that ear. He took care not to say no, but behold! he again recurred to his usual evasions, circumlocutions, and hoppings from bush to bush. "It would be necessary," he said, "to get rid of that order for Renzo's arrest. To tell the truth: here, with this edict in force, to proclaim the name of Lorenzo

Tramaglino from the altar, I couldn't do it with a quiet conscience: I sincerely wish them well; I should be afraid I were doing them an injury."

Here Agnese and the widow, each in her own way, broke in to combat these arguments: Don Abbondio reproduced them in another shape: it was a perpetual reiteration: when lo! enter Renzo with a determined step, and tidings in his face.

"The Signor Marquis has arrived," said he.

"What does this mean? Arrived where?" asked Don Abbondio.

"He has arrived at his palace, which was once Don Rodrigo's; because this Signor Marquis is the heir by feoffment in trust, as they say; so that there's no longer any doubt. As for myself, I should be very glad of it, if I could hear that that poor man had died in peace. At any rate, I've said Paternosters for him hitherto; now I will say the De Profundis. And this Signor Marquis is a very fine man."

"Certainly," said Don Abbondio, "I've heard him mentioned more than once as a really excellent Signor, a man of the old stamp. But is it positively true?

"Will you believe the sexton?"

"Why?"

"Because he's seen him with his own eyes. I've only been in the neighborhood of the castle; and, to say the truth, I went there on purpose, thinking they must know something there. And several people told me about it. Afterward, I met Ambrogio, who had just been up there, and had seen him, I say, take possession. Will you hear Ambrogio's testimony? I made him wait outside on purpose."

"Yes, let him come in," said Don Abbondio. Renzo went and called the sexton, who, after confirming every fact, adding fresh particulars, and dissipating every doubt, again went on his way.

"Ah! he's dead, then! he's really gone!" exclaimed Don Abbondio. "You see, my children, how Providence overtakes some people. You know what a grand thing this is! what a great relief to this poor country! for it was impossible to live with him here. This pestilence has been a great scourge, but it has also been a good broom; it has swept away some, from whom, my children, we could never have freed ourselves."

"I've forgiven him from my heart," said Renzo.

"And you do right! it's your duty to do so," replied Don Abbondio; "but one may thank Heaven, I suppose, who has delivered us from him. But to return to ourselves: I repeat, do what you like best. If you wish me to marry you, here I am: if it be more convenient to you to go elsewhere, do so. As to the order of arrest, I likewise think that, as there is now no longer any one who keeps his eye on you, and wishes to do you harm, it isn't worth giving yourself any great uneasiness about it; particularly as this gracious decree, on occasion of the birth of the most serene Infanta, is interposed. And then the plague! the plague! Oh, that plague has put to flight many a grand thing! So that, if you like—to-day is Thursday—Sunday I'll ask you in church. Meanwhile, we'll ask for a dispensation for the two other times."

It is impossible to describe the good temper and pleasantry with which he made these remarks. The tidings he had just heard had given him a freedom and a talkativeness to which he had long been a stranger.

The day following, he received a visit as unexpected as it was gratifying, from the Signor Marquis we have mentioned; a person beyond the prime of manhood, whose countenance was, as it were, a seal to what report had said of him; open, benevolent, placid, humble, dignified, and with something that indicated a resigned sadness.

"I come," said he, "to bring you the compliments of the Cardinal Archbishop."

"Ah, what condescension of you both!"

"When I was about to take leave of that incomparable man, who is good enough to honor me with his friendship, he mentioned to me two young betrothed persons of this parish, who have had to suffer on account of the unfortunate Don Rodrigo. His Lordship wishes to have some tidings of them. Are they living? and are their affairs settled?"

"Everything is settled. Indeed, I was intending to write about them to his Eminence; but now that I have the honor"—

"Are they here?"

"They are; and they will be man and wife as soon as possible."

"And I request you to be good enough to tell me if I can be of any service to them, and also to instruct me in the best way of doing so. During this calamity, I have lost the only two sons I had, and their mother, and have received three considerable inheritances."

"May Heaven bless you! I thank you most heartily, in the name of these my children. And since your illustrious Lordship gives me so much encouragement, it is true, my Lord, that I have an expedient to suggest which perhaps may not displease your Lordship. Allow me to tell you, then, that these worthy people are resolved to go and settle themselves elsewhere, and to sell what little property they have here: the young man a vineyard of about nine or ten perches, if I'm not mistaken, but neglected and completely overgrown. Besides, he also has a cottage, and his bride another, now both, you will see, the abode of rats. A nobleman like your Lordship can not know how the poor fare, when they are reduced to the necessity of disposing of their goods. It always ends by falling into the hands of some knave, who, if occasion offers, will make love to the place for some time, and as soon as he finds that its owner wants to sell it, draws

back, and pretends not to wish for it; so that he is obliged to run after him, and give it him for a piece of bread; particularly, too, in such circumstances as these. My Lord Marquis will already have seen the drift of my remarks. The best charity your most illustrious Lordship can afford to these people is, to relieve them from this difficulty by purchasing their little property."

The Marquis highly commended the suggestion, returned thanks for it, begged Don Abbondio to be the judge of the price, and to charge it exorbitantly, and completed the curate's amazement by proposing to go together immediately to the bride's house, where they should probably also find the bridegroom.

By the way, Don Abbondio, in high glee, as may be imagined, thought of and mentioned another proposal. "Since your illustrious Lordship is so inclined to benefit these poor people, there is another service which you might render them. The young man has an order of arrest out against him, a kind of sentence of outlawry, for some trifling fault he committed in Milan two years ago, on that day of the great insurrection, in which he chanced to be implicated, without any malicious intentions, indeed quite ignorantly, like a mouse caught in a trap. Nothing serious, I assure you. My Lord Marquis has influence in Milan, as is just, both as a noble cavalier, and as the great man he really is—No, no, allow me to say it, for truth will have its way. A recommendation, a word from a person like yourself, is more than is necessary to obtain a ready acquittal."

"Are there not heavy charges against this young man?"

"Pshaw, pshaw! I would not believe them. They made a great stir about it at the moment; but I don't think there's anything now beyond the mere formalities."

"If so, the thing will be easy; and I willingly take it upon me."

"And yet you will not let it be said that you are a

great man. I say it, and I will say it; in spite of your Lordship, I will say it. And even if I were to be silent, it would be to no purpose, because everybody says so: and *vox populi, vox Dei.*"

They found Renzo and the three women together, as they expected. By and by they came to the proposal. Don Abbondio, being requested by him to name the price, came forward; and, after a few gestures and apologies—that it wasn't in his line, and that he could only guess at random, and that he spoke out of obedience, and that he left it to him, mentioned what he thought a most extravagant sum. The purchaser said that, for his part, he was extremely well satisfied, and, as if he had misunderstood, repeated double the amount. He would not hear of rectifying the mistake, and cut short and concluded all further conversation, by inviting the party to dinner at his palace the day after the wedding, when the deeds should be properly drawn out.

The dispensation arrived, the acquittal arrived, that blessed day arrived: the bride and bridegroom went in triumphal security to that very church, where, with Don Abbondio's own mouth, they were declared man and wife. Another, and far more singular triumph, was the going next day to the palace.

The nobleman received them with great kindness, conducted them into a fine large servants'-hall, and seated the bride and bridegroom at table with Agnese and their Milanese friend; and before withdrawing to dine elsewhere with Don Abbondio, wished to assist a little at this first banquet, and even helped to wait upon them.

Nothing was now thought of, but packing up and setting off on their journey; the Tramaglino family to their new country, and the widow to Milan. The tears, the thanks, the promises of going to see each other, were many. Not less tender, even to tears, was the separation of Renzo and the family from his hospitable friend;

nor let it be thought that matters went on coldly even with Don Abbondio. The three poor creatures had always preserved a certain respectful attachment to their curate; and he, in the bottom of his heart, had always wished them well.

What, however, will the reader now say, on hearing that they had hardly arrived, and settled themselves in their adopted country, before Renzo found there annoyances all prepared for him. This is a short sketch of the matter.

The talk that had been there made about Lucia, for some time before her arrival; the knowledge that Renzo had suffered so much for her sake, and had always been constant and faithful; perhaps a word or two from some friend who was partial to him and all belonging to him —had created a kind of curiosity to see the young girl, and a kind of expectation of seeing her very beautiful. Now we know what expectation is: imaginative, credulous, confident; afterward, when the trial comes, difficult to satisfy, disdainful; never finding what she had counted upon, because, in fact, she knew not her own mind; and pitilessly exacting severe payment for the loveliness so unmeaningly lavished on her object.

When this Lucia appeared, many who had perhaps thought that she must certainly have golden locks, and cheeks blushing like the rose, and a pair of eyes one more beautiful than the other, and what not besides, began to shrug their shoulders, turn up their noses, and say: "Is this she? After such a time, after so much talk, one expected something better! What is she, after all? A peasant, like hundreds more. Why, there are plenty everywhere as good as she is, and far better too." Then, descending to particulars, one remarked one defect, and another, another; nor were there wanting some who considered her perfectly ugly.

As, however, no one thought of telling Renzo these

things to his face, so far there was no great harm done. They who really did harm, they who widened the breach, were some persons who reported them to him: and Renzo—what else could be expected?—took them very much to heart. He began to muse upon them, and to make them matters of discussion, both with those who talked to him on the subject, and more at length in his own mind.—What does it matter to you? And who told you to expect anything? did I ever talk to you about her? did I ever tell you she was beautiful? And when you asked me if she was, did I ever say anything in answer, but that she was a good girl? She's a peasant! Did I ever tell you that I would bring you here a princess? She displeases you! Don't look at her, then. You've some beautiful women: look at them.

Only look how a trifle may sometimes suffice to decide a man's state for his whole life. Had Renzo been obliged to spend his in that neighborhood, agreeably to his first intentions, he would have got on but very badly. From being himself displeased, he had now become displeasing. He was on bad terms with everybody, because everybody might be one of Lucia's criticisers.

But it might be said that the plague had undertaken to amend all Renzo's errors. That scourge had carried off the owner of another silk-mill, situated almost at the gate of Bergamo; and the heir, a dissolute young fellow, finding nothing in this edifice that could afford him any diversion, proposed, or rather was anxious, to dispose of it, even at half its value; but he wanted the money down upon the spot, that he might instantly expend it with unproductive prodigality. The matter having come to Bortolo's ears, he immediately went to see it: tried to treat about it: a more advantageous bargain could not have been hoped for; but that condition of ready money spoiled all, because his whole property, slowly made up out of his savings, was still far from reaching the re-

quired sum. Leaving the question, therefore, still open, he returned in haste, communicated the affair to his cousin, and proposed to take it in partnership. So capital an agreement cut short all Renzo's economical dubitations, so that he quickly decided upon business, and complied with the proposal. They went together, and the bargain was concluded. When, then, the new owners came to live upon their own possessions, Lucia, who was here expected by no one, not only did not go thither subjected to criticism, but, we may say, was not displeasing to anybody.

Before the first year of their marriage was completed a beautiful little creature came to light; and, as if it had been made on purpose to give Renzo an early opportunity of fulfilling that magnanimous promise of his, it was a little girl. It may be believed that it was named Maria. Afterward, in the course of time, came I know not how many others, of both sexes; and Agnese was busy enough in carrying them about, one after the other, calling them little rogues, and imprinting upon their faces hearty kisses, which left a white mark for ever so long afterward. They were all very well inclined; and Renzo would have them all learn to read and write, saying, that since this amusement was in fashion, they ought at least to take advantage of it.

The finest thing was to hear him relate his adventures: and he always finished by enumerating the great things he had learned from them, for the better government of himself in future. "I've learned," he would say, "not to meddle in disturbances: I've learned not to make speeches in the street: I've learned not to drink more than I want: I've learned not to hold the knocker of a door in my hand, when crazy-headed people are about: and I've learned not to buckle a little bell to my foot, before thinking of the consequences."

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Manzoni, Alessandro

The Betrothed

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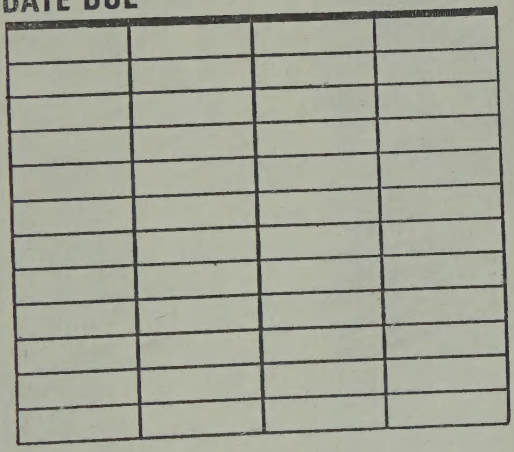
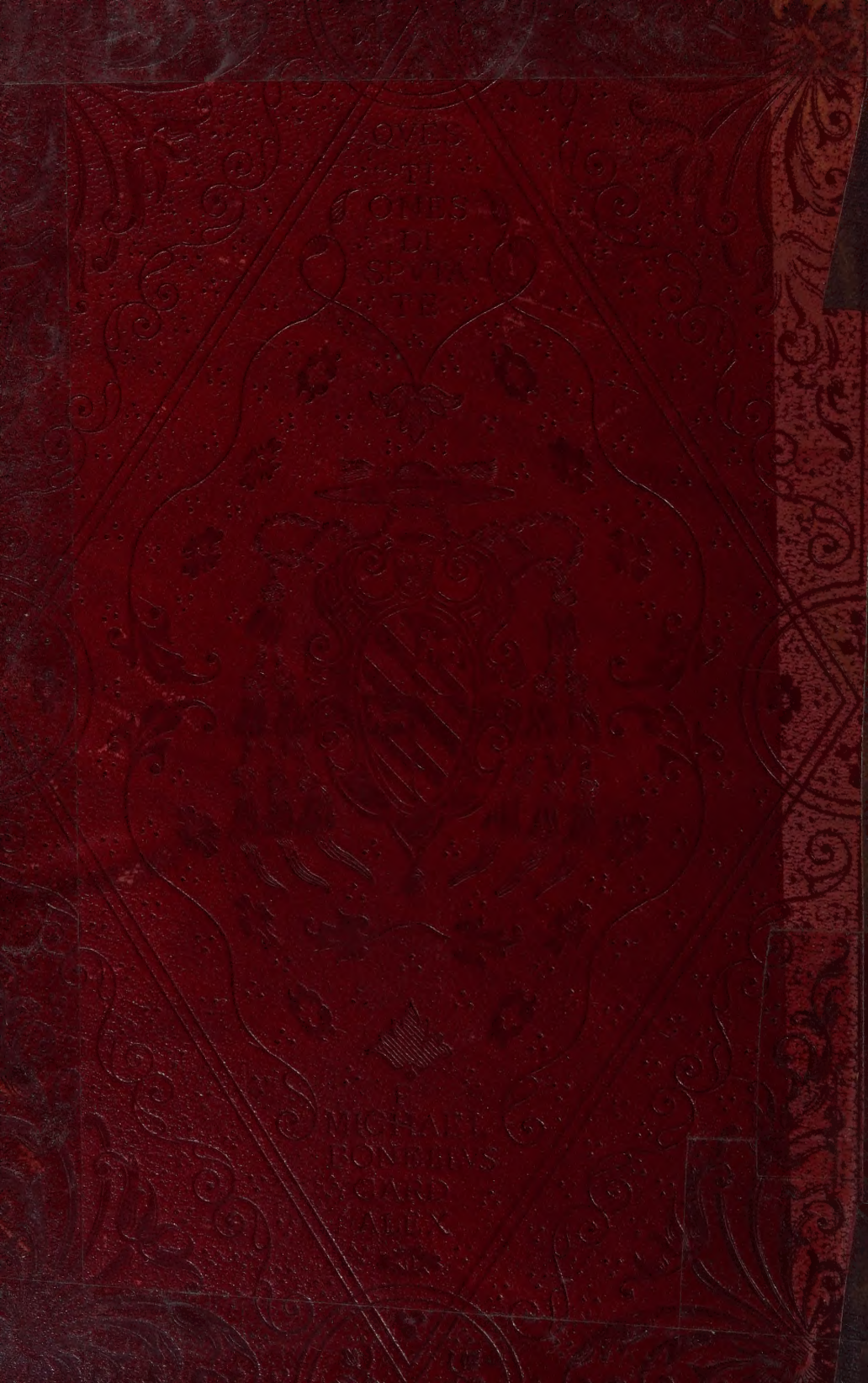
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